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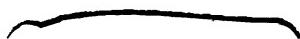
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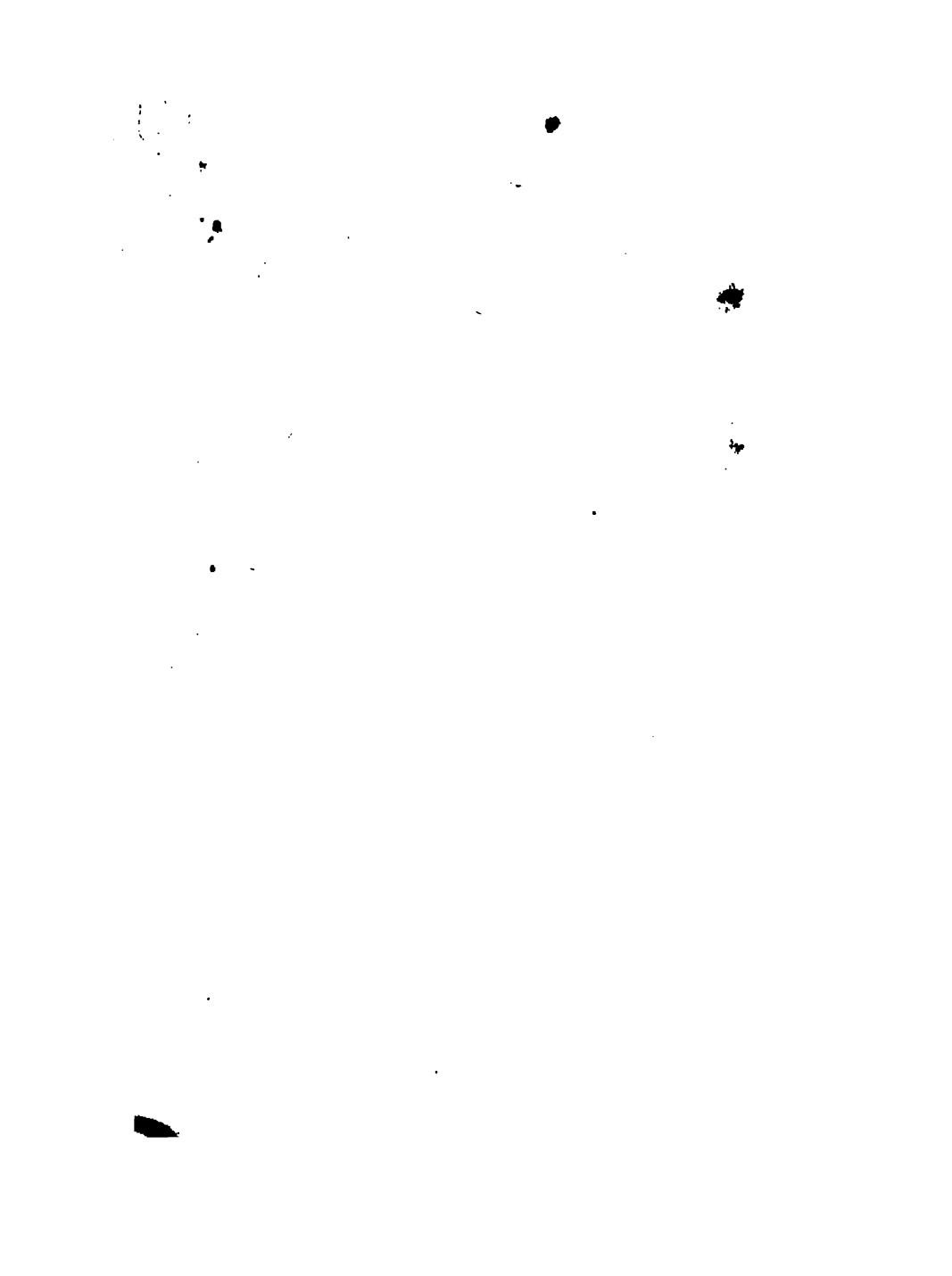
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THE
POETS AND PEOPLES
OF
FOREIGN LANDS.

BY
J. W. CROMBIE.

'Bards who died content on pleasant sward,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan!'
KEATS.

LONDON :
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1890.



TO
My Father and Mother
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



P R E F A C E.

'THE use of foreign literature,' wrote Mr. Bagehot some thirty years ago, 'is like the use of foreign travel. It imprints on us . . . a deep impression of great and strange and noble objects.' There have been great modifications in the conditions of foreign travel since these words were written. The practical development of steam and electricity, joined to the business energy of Messrs. Cook, have brought within reach of those whose incomes are slender the impressions of 'great and noble' objects alluded to; but the 'strange' are daily growing more difficult to find. Everything abroad is tinctured with cosmopolitanism. We seem like snails to take our homes about with us wherever we go. Nowhere can we flee from the face of our fellow-countrymen. Singly, or still worse, gregariously, he breaks upon our reveries in the Halls of the Abencerrages, or dispels the poetry of

loneliness from the Temples of Pæstum. His presence makes these places none the less 'great and noble,' it is true ; but it materially detracts from their 'strangeness.' Like Michael Angelo, we are ever struggling to rid ourselves of our own shadow, which falls on every object we contemplate, distorting and marring its natural effect ; but unlike the sculptor, we cannot escape from it by any expedient so simple as carrying a candle in our hats. Jaded with the cares of civilization, we crowd abroad in search of some fresh spot and foreign people, where we may revel in all that is primitive and quaint and picturesque : a sojourn in whose midst we fondly hope

‘would be enjoyment more than in the march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake
mankind.’

But the search is vain, the hope delusive. We find over all the shadow of ourselves, and return, railing, with Napoleon, at this '*veille Europe qui m'ennuie.*'

While the facilities of foreign travel have thus increased, the study of foreign literature has happily developed along with them ; and in the latter, I maintain, will be found the dock-leaf, which is said, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, to grow apace with the nettle. The late Mr. Darwin sought relaxation from his scientific

labours in the reading of novels ; but he always regretted that he had not rather cultivated a taste for poetry ; maintaining that its study was the most restful pastime for a busy mind, since it afforded the greatest change from the prosaic business of life. If Mr. Darwin's reasoning be correct, it must follow that foreign poetry—the poetry of a people who even in their prosaic moods seem strange to us—must offer the completest change, and therefore the greatest possible rest and refreshment. Moreover, it supplies the very object we now seek in vain from foreign travel. There is no channel through which we can more readily reach the intimate life and thought of a primitive people than through their popular poetry. It is the Asmodeus whose magic art unroofs for us not only their houses, but their hearts ; the confessional where their inmost secrets stand recorded.

By popular poetry I do not mean the great classics—the Dantes, Goethes, Molières. These are cosmopolitan rather than national. They speak for all times and all peoples. They are members of the Great Federal Senate of Literature, a chamber where nationality is merged in humanity. It is rather to the local, though humbler, representatives of poetry that our purpose directs us.

There are some nations where the whole people is its own poet—*Landesgemeinden*, as it were—who need no representative, but represent themselves.

Such is Spain, of whose folk-poetry the first paper in this volume treats. Such, too, were the Moors, of whose poetry the Spanish is but a fainter echo. While cases like these are exceptional, every people, however humble or obscure, who are bound together by a common tongue (though it be but a *patois*), a common origin, and common interests, can boast of a poet among themselves who has sung their local ballads and traditions, and thrown a halo of poetry round the simple pleasures and sorrows, fears and aspirations, that make up the drama of their life.

The study of this popular poetry I have always found to fitly combine with and enhance the charm of travel abroad ; while at home it affords a refreshing relaxation from the prose of business. With the hope that more may turn to it, I publish the few essays which this volume comprises. None of these subjects have been dealt with fully by English writers—most of them not at all. I have attempted no subtle literary criticism, my object being to describe rather than analyze. Each poet is fully illustrated by translations from his works, for which in every case I am wholly responsible. But, except in the paper on Moorish poetry (where my versions are paraphrases rather than translations), the originals will always be found below. While I am well aware that to invite the attention of my reader to these originals is only to court a condemnation of my

translations, I shall think myself fully compensated if their study awake in him some of the interest and pleasure they have given to me.

Three of these papers have already appeared, in a less extended form, in *Macmillan's Magazine* and the *Edinburgh Review*, to the kindness of whose editors I am indebted for permission to republish.

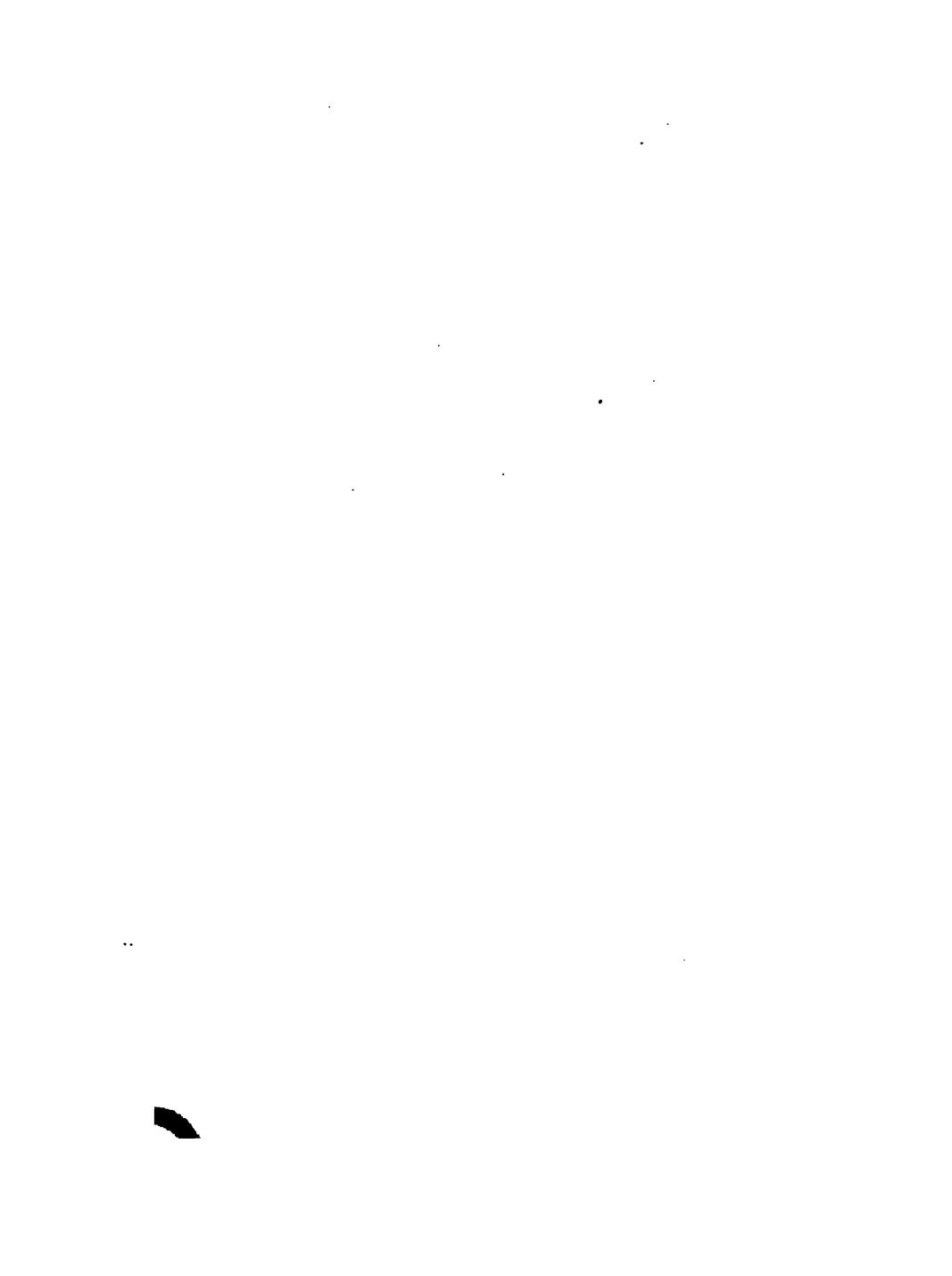




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THE FOLK-POETRY OF SPAIN.

EVEN a casual traveller passing through Spain, and more especially Andalusia, its southern part, cannot fail to notice the strange quavering chant which, with little variation in tune, and constant variation in words, is for ever on the lips of the people. The muleteer driving his team across the sierra, the cigarette-girl in the factory, the beggar on the street, all have the same love of singing, and all appear to possess in a greater or less degree the remarkable aptitude of improvising words for their songs.

Although many of the verses thus improvised melt away and are forgotten as soon as they fall from the lips, there are moments of inspiration in which some singer, more gifted than his fellows, may turn a couplet so aptly rhymed, so witty, or so pathetic, that it impresses itself on the memory of its author, who sings it again and again, till his companions have learned to sing it too ; and till, passed from mouth to mouth, it travels so far

that all trace of its authorship is forgotten, and it becomes the traditional property of the people. By this process of survival of the fittest a vast oral literature of popular lyric poetry has been formed—a literature which time changes as rapidly as it does the seashore, daily washing up fresh deposits and daily crumbling the old away.

It would be strange if a phenomenon so remarkable as this passed by unobserved in this age of observation. There have been many attempts during the present century to collect and perpetuate the traditional poetry of the Spanish people, and among those who have turned their attention to the work are names as eminent in literature as Lafuente y Alcantara, and 'Fernan Caballero,' that lady who has painted the Spanish peasantry with such art and sympathy in her well-known romances. But it was not till 1882 that anything like an exhaustive collection was made, when Don Rodriguez Marin, himself a poet of considerable talent, undertook the task of systematically collecting the whole of this folk-poetry from the lips of the people themselves ; and his collection is still being supplemented by the efforts of a band of enthusiasts, among whom Don Antonio Machado and Don Alejandro Guichot are the most conspicuous.*

* The following are the principal collections :
Coleccion de Seguidillas, Teranas y Polos por 'Don Preciso'
(Don N. Zamaracola). Madrid, 1799.

The peculiar characteristic of Spanish folk-poetry is that it consists entirely of detached stanzas, each containing in itself a complete poetical sentiment. A number of these are sung in rapid succession without any alteration of tune, but they are selected at random by the singer, and have no bearing on each other. These stanzas generally take one of two forms : *copla* or *seguidilla*. The *copla*, or couplet, consists of four octosyllabic lines, the second and fourth of which rhyme. The *seguidilla* is a couplet with other three lines called the *estrevillo* tacked on to the end of it.

The purpose of the *seguidilla*, like that of our own 'ballads' originally, is to serve as an accompaniment to dancing. Indeed, all the folk-poetry of Spain is so closely wedded to the national dances, that in order to fully appreciate it, one must see a gala night among the peasantry in some country village where old traditions still remain unpolluted. It is the evening of a wedding-day, or a feast-day perhaps, and a company of merry-makers has assembled in one of those low-roofed rooms

Fernan Caballero, Cuentos y Poesias Populares Andaluces.
Sevilla, 1859.

Cancionero Popular por Don Emilio Lafuente y Alcantara.
Madrid, 1865.

Cantos Populares Espanoles por Don Rodriguez Marin.
Sevilla, 1882.

El Folk Lore Andaluz (passim). Sevilla, 1882, etc.

Tradiciones Populares Espanoles (passim). Sevilla, 1883,
etc.

whose scanty furniture and walls, bare except for a few prints of saints, give it the appearance of being far larger than it actually is. The on-lookers have seated themselves round the walls ; the guitar-player, cigarette in mouth, has taken up a prominent position ; and the best voices have been told off to sing the *seguidillas*. It is then that a young man and woman, dressed in the picturesque costume that is now so fast disappearing, step into the centre of the room and take up positions facing each other at a couple of yards' distance. The music strikes up, and after a short prelude on the guitar the singing and dancing commence. The dance is free from all violent movements. It consists rather of a graceful swaying of the body and arms than of complicated steps. So small a part do the feet play that the dancers seem scarcely to lift them from the ground, and never quit the spot where they first took up their position except twice in each figure ; once in the middle, when by a graceful step they change places ; and again towards the end, when they resume their former positions. The dancers generally accompany themselves with castanets, the audience also assisting to mark time either with castanets, or by clapping their hands. At the end of each figure, music, dancing, and castanets come to a sudden stop. For a moment dead silence reigns ; and the two dancers, thrown into strikingly graceful postures, remain immovable, as

though some magic spell had at once silenced the music and transformed the dancers to marble. A graceful stop (*bien parado*) is the crucial test of a *bolero* dancer, and when successfully accomplished the audience will break into loud applause, and repeated cries of '*Olle ! Olle !*' will greet the performers.

Such is the dance to which these verses are sung as accompaniments. Most of them have for their theme the old story of tender or unrequited love ; and if they do not always tell it with depth of feeling, they seldom want some trace of that ready wit which Spaniards even of the humblest class can always command.

By my senses' windows five
Thou crept in one day ;
Ere I knew it, to my heart
Thou had'st found thy way :
 Now 'tis past all doubt
That without my knowing it
Thou shalt not creep out.*

Like unto a shadow
Women seem to be ;
They fly you when you follow,
And follow when you flee :

* Por las cinco ventanas
De mis sentidos
Te entrastes en mi pecho
Sin ser sentido :
 Pero has de advertir
Que sin sentir no puedes
Volver á salir.

And this the reason why
 Some that will not settle
 Are just left to fly.*

Notwithstanding the enthusiastic assurances of 'Don Preciso,' one of the first collectors of *seguidillas*, it is difficult to believe that all those included in his collection are of genuinely popular origin. In lowly society all may indeed have circulated, but there are many whose style betrays a noble birth at least.

Absence is the light, and love
 The shadow that it throws ;
 The further from the light we move
 The more the shadow grows :
 Absence is the blast that blows,
 The feeble flame it quenches ;
 The strong, still fiercer glows.†
 Thought, that hast wings and can fly,
 Swift as a bird through the air,
 Bear on thy bosom this sigh,
 Carry it thou knowest where :

* Lo mismo que la sombra
 Son las mujeres
 Huyen del que las sigue,
 Al que huye quieren :
 Y de aquí nace
 Que quedan muchas veces
 Sin colocarse.

† Es amor en la ausencia
 Como la sombra,
 Que cuanto más se aleja,
 Más cuerpo toma :
 La ausencia es aire,
 Que apaga el fuego chico
 Y aviva el grande.

My lady to tell
That her image alone
In my bosom shall dwell.*

Moreover, the *seguidilla* is difficult to compose. Apart from the multiplication of rhymes, the unity of thought must be maintained up to the very end, otherwise the *estrevillo* in time gets detached and lost. Many which are complete in the early collections have been found by later collectors circulating amongst the people without any *estrevillo*. So much is this the case that the bulk of the *seguidillas* at present sung to accompany dancing are really *coplas*; the place of the *estrevillo* being supplied by some movable and more or less meaningless chorus, or by a mere repetition of the last three lines.

The four-lined couplet, or *copla*, is the commoner, and probably the older, vehicle of popular poetry. Its measure is simple, and only the second and fourth lines rhyme—a matter rendered easy both by the richness of the Spanish language, and by the admission of those assonant or vowel rhymes, which characterize the old Spanish romances, and are borrowed from Arabian poetry. Hence it is the form of verse which best lends itself to impro-

* Pensamiento que vuelas
Mas que las aves,
Llevale ese suspiro
A quien tu sabes:
Y dile á mi amor
Que tengo su retrato
En mi corazon.

visation, an art which every Spaniard practises, and in which most excel.

Any incident important enough to raise a little passing excitement will call forth a *copla* to commemorate it. The occasion in itself may be very trivial. ‘It is impossible to take a walk through Seville at present,’ says Señor Machado, ‘without hearing sung at every turn, in all the lanes and courts as well as in the music-halls and dancing saloons, the unedifying jingle of the *corruco*, a sort of novel sweetmeat of peculiar form and confection, which has produced a perfect literary epidemic in the town.’ Indeed, it would seem as if sweetmeats could hardly be sold in this city without a musical advertisement. Señor Guichot met on the streets one day an itinerant pedlar selling little male and female figures made of sugar, temptingly decorated with plums, which he was thus recommending to his juvenile customers :

A farthing for a bridegroom !
A farthing for a bride !
Who would not for two farthings
A wedded pair provide ?*

These *pregones*, as they call this happy Spanish substitute for our London street-cries, would form a collection in themselves. One Sevillian flower-

* A cuarto la novia
Y á cuarto el novio
Quién por dos cuartos
No *jace* un casorio.

seller in particular, familiarly known as ‘Vencentito,’ used to be famed for the beauty and originality of his *pregones*, many of which I believe have been collected.

Among Eastern peoples this custom of singing the praise of the wares they are selling is too familiar to need description here ; and there can be no doubt that it is to the Moorish occupation of the Peninsula that the Spaniard owes his skill in improvisation, and his love of well-turned verses. To what a pitch of perfection the poetic art was carried by the Moors I have elsewhere endeavoured to describe ; and if we consider that the intimate relations which existed between them and their Spanish subjects during the eight centuries of Mussulman occupation—a period as long as that which divides the Norman conquest from our own times—have left indelible traces on the language, architecture, manners and customs of modern Spain, it would be strange if so salient a feature as their passion for poetry had died when these others have survived. Hence it is in Southern Spain, where the Moorish power was first established and last overthrown, that the richest harvest of traditional verses is found. In Morocco too, where the modern Moors evince the same love of singing and power of improvisation that was brought over by their ancestors, who fled with Boabdil from the Alhambra, many of the verses of their popular

songs might almost pass for translations of Spanish couplets, and point unmistakably to a common origin. Nor is this likeness confined to the words alone ; it is equally remarkable in the singing itself and the music of the accompaniment. No traveller, till he has listened to a street concert in Tangier or Tetuan, can realize the full truth of the old saying that 'Africa begins at the Pyrenees.'

The subjects of Spanish couplets are as various as the motives of human action itself. Not a few have been called forth by some passing political event. Thus,

With climbing to the roof I've worn
The boots from off my feet,
To see if brave Salvochea
Goes passing up the street—*

is one of many which contains an allusion to the cantonal movement. If these were collected they would form a faithful chronicle of all the events, political or domestic, serious or trivial, which have at any time impressed themselves on the mind of the people. But such a collection could never be made. For the couplets that are engendered by passing events are destined to oblivion as soon as the excitement has subsided. In a few exceptional cases they may survive. Señor Marin's collection

* Los zapatos tengo rotos
De subir a la azotea
Por ver si veo pasar
Al valiente Salvochea.

contains one or two which allude to events that took place in the fifteenth century ; but these are so rare, and the events alluded to so memorable, that even they have probably been composed in more recent times.

If their folk-poetry does not furnish a complete political history of the Spanish people, it, at least, forms a valuable record of their social life. Señor Marin has collected his materials among all sorts and conditions of men; not only from the labourers in the olive-yards and the soldiers in the barracks, but even from the lips of the prisoners in their cells. We have thus a complete picture of prison-life from the most important of all aspects—the prisoners' own point of view. Many of the prison couplets are of considerable pathos.

They've dragged me to a prison cell.
At midnight, when they found me,
I wore thy kerchief, love, and ah !
It was with it they bound me.*

The Spanish brigand is now almost, if not altogether, extinct. Yet it is not so long since José Maria, of whose dash and gallantry Prosperé Merimée gives so graphic an account, was at once the terror and the admiration of Spain ; and popular

* A los doce de la noche
Niñó me llevaron preso,
Y para mayor dolor,
Me ataron con tu pañuelo.

poetry continues to bear testimony to the roving boldness and romance of brigand life :

When mounted on my charger
I fearless ride thy way :
A carbine, two pistols,
A dirk, and come who may !*

More interesting still as a record of old customs are the students' couplets. Modern tendencies, which have altered so many things in Spain, have not spared that most Spanish of all institutions—the student life. The students of to-day have lost all the romance that once marked them out as a race apart. Their quaint old customs have fallen into disuse ; their picturesque dresses have been discarded. But although the Salamanca of Gil Blas is now gone, it has lived to within touch of our own times. There are grayheaded Spaniards still living who regret the good old days of their youth, when, after the Academical session was over, the students set off in parties and wandered from village to village, trusting for a livelihood to nothing but their guitars, their ready wit, and the inexhaustible good-nature of their countrymen. The arrival of these merry bands at a village was hailed with delight by both old and young, but by none more than the girls, who, according to the testimony of the

* En montando en mi caballo
No terreo a ningun' valiente :
Un retaco, dos pistolas
Un cuchillo y venga gente !

couplets that now remain the sole epitaphs of these rollicking days, were bound to have a student for their first love. Their mothers, however, took a more practical, if less romantic, view of such attachments.

Ah yes, the student's love, my child,
By none could be surpasssd ;
'Twould be the best in all the world—
If only it would last.*

And, indeed, it is probable that the mothers gauged the sincerity of their daughters' suitors better than the daughters did themselves ; for it is hunger, and not love, that is the constant theme of the students' verses. None of them allude to a broken heart, but almost all of them to an empty stomach. Even when a lady on the balcony is being serenaded, the demands of an insatiable appetite insist on forcing themselves in and jeopardising the romance of the situation.

Gentle lady on the balcon,
Pity on our wretched plight.
Pray throw down but half a dollar
To buy supper for to-night.†

* Si el amor del estudiante
Fuera cosa permanente
No hubiera nada en el mundo
Que fuera tan excelente.

† Señorita del balcon
Diga le bi a su papa
Que los eche medio duro
Para esta noche cenar.

A couplet is essentially the expression of a sentiment. But if it is to be anything more than ephemeral, if it is to survive the moment of its birth and become a traditional possession of the people, it must not only express a sentiment, but a sentiment experienced often and by many. Those of which we have hitherto been speaking are by the nature of their subjects limited to certain classes—prisoners, soldiers, or students. Hence they are few in number; but there are sentiments common to all classes of men, such as love and religion, and we may therefore expect to find these inspiring a large number of couplets. Señor Marín's collection shows this to be the case. Taking the contents of the five volumes of which it consists, and eliminating the riddles and children's rhymes (which, however, occupy but a small space), we find that three verses out of every four have love for their theme.

For lyric poetry no subject can be better suited; and it is in the verses which treat of love that the truest poetry is found. Every possible incident in the course of a love-story has its own couplet. Every phase of the passion, from its dawning to its final issue, is reflected in a verse. The result is a many-volumed novel—the love-story of a whole nation.

The first awakening of that passion which 'leaves father and mother' has seldom been expressed with more simple poetry than this:

Deep in my soul two kisses rest,
Forgot they ne'er shall be :
The last my mother's lips impressed,
The first I stole from thee.*

Then we have the lover sighing like a furnace :

If all the sighs thy lips now shape
Could meet upon the way
With those that from mine own escape,
What things they'd have to say !†

Again, we have the ripples in that course that
never will run smooth. The hated conscription
parts the lovers :

A soldier's lot I do not dread
If such be fate's decree :
'Tis not my musket weighs me down ;
'Tis parting, love, from thee.‡

Or perhaps bodings of infidelity throw their
shadows between them :

* Dos besos tengo en el alma
Que no se apartan de mi :
El ultimo de mi madre,
Y el primera que te di.

† Sospiros que de mí salgan.
Y otros que de tí saldrán
Si en el camino se encuentran
Que de cosas se dirán !

‡ Soldado soy, qué remedio ?
Así lo quiso mi suerte
Y no me pesa el fusil,
Pero sí dejar de verte.

My true love first in thee I met,
 Thou taught'st me to adore ;
 Oh, do not teach me to forget !
 I seek no lesson more.*

And sometimes the worst fears are realized, and we have the passionate cry of the woman who has been seduced and abandoned, and yet who does not mourn her misery and shame more than she regrets the loss of him who has wrought it :

For thee my God I dared to scorn ;
 My fame thou stole from me.
 And now, alas ! I'm left to mourn
 My God, my fame, and thee.†

A large number of the love couplets fall under the head of what is known as *requiebros*, or compliments (literally ‘mashes’). In Spain this art of turning a compliment reaches its greatest perfection, not in the polished society of the Court, but among the humble classes. Female beauty is felt by them to contrast so strongly with their own roughness, that they regard it with a feeling amount-

* Tu eres mi primer amor,
 Tu me enseñaste á querer ;
 No me enseñes á olvidar,
 Que no lo quiero aprender.

† Por tí me olvidé de Dios
 Por tí la gloria perdí,
 Y ahora me voy á quedar
 Sin Dios sin gloria y sin ti.

ing almost to worship. The beautiful Duchess of Devonshire used to say that every compliment paid her was insipid after the dustman's who asked leave to light his pipe at her grace's eyes. Such wit is rarely found in this country in so lowly a quarter ; but the dustman's compliment is a perfect example of a Spanish *requiebro*, such as any beautiful woman passing down the street of a Spanish town would be frequently greeted with. The *requiebros* expressed in poetry and sung in the serenades are therefore not only numerous but often extremely happy.

If the sun care to rise, let him rise,
And if not, let him ever lie hid ;
For the light from my lady-love's eyes
Shines forth as the sun never did.*

And again :

Come, take my heart, I give it thee
With two golden keys provided ;
Open it, step in and see
How it just holds thyself inside it.†

* Salga el sol, si ha de salir
Y si no, que nunca salga ;
Que para alumbrarme á mi
La luz de tus ojos basta.

† Ahi tienes mi corazon
Fechadito con dos llaves :
Abre lo, y mete te dentro
Que tu solita bien cabes.

Come take my heart, I give it thee,
'Tis thine to slay if slain thou will'st it ;
But thou must then a victim be,
For slain the heart, thou diest that fill'st it.*

The whiteness of his mistress's skin—an endless theme with the poet—is thus wittily sung :

Before thy brow the snow-flakes
Hurry past and say,
'Where we are not needed
Wherefore should we stay ?†

Yet, prominent as is the part played by compliment, it must yield to jealousy. This passion inspires upwards of a thousand couplets in Señor Marin's collection. The Spaniard will never consent 'to leave a corner in the heart he loves for other's use.' He is jealous of everyone and everything : of the air that plays with her tresses, of the water that reflects her image, even of the statues of the saints in church.

* Ahi tienes mi corazon
Si loquieres matar puedes
Mas dentro de el vas tu
Si lo matas tambien mueres.

† La nieve por tu cara
Pasó diciendo :
En donde no haga falta
No me detengo.

When inside the church thou goest
Let thy veil these bright eyes hide ;
Lest the saints—for all they're saintly—
Leave their niches for thy side.*

Sometimes his jealousy takes a more practical, if less poetical, form in resolving to strew ashes in front of his mistress's house, in which the footsteps of a rival may be traced ; while if he succeed in finding him the threat of making his scaffold beneath the window of the faithless lady is one which unhappily too often goes beyond mere singing.

Love will continue to be the ruling theme of Spanish folk-poetry so long as the romantic custom of serenading remains in vogue. This custom, so characteristic of the country, owes its maintenance, if not its origin, to the strictness with which young people of different sexes are kept apart. The Spaniards are in this respect extremely prudish, and the common people even more so than the higher grades of society. In no European country is chaperoning carried to such a length. An amusing instance of this once came under my observation. At a house in Seville where I was a visitor, a middle-aged charwoman used to work

* Quando bayas á la iglesia
Ponte un belito' n la cara
Que los santos, con ser santos
De los artares se bajan.

for the family, coming from her own house in the morning and returning there again at night. Her personal appearance was not such as to suggest undue attention from gallants ; but Pepa, though no longer young, was still unmarried ('left to take care of the sacred images' as the Spaniards sarcastically designate that state), and the demands of Spanish propriety could be appeased by nothing less than her married aunt elaborately chaperoning her to and from her work. Even married women, especially among the gipsies, are often not permitted to go about alone. The gipsy *vendadora* who plies from house to house selling lace and bric-a-brac is generally escorted by her swarthy husband, who remains smoking his cigarette in the *patio* below, while she conducts her business with my lady up in the drawing-room. The Spaniard in his relation to women is, in fact, still more than half a Mussulman. He guards his wife and daughters with Oriental jealousy, and considers his house *harim*, a sacred retreat to which he hesitates to introduce a stranger. But at no time does he observe more rigorous precautions than when his daughter is engaged to be married, and against no one is his door more inexorably closed than against the accepted suitor. On rare occasions, and under matronly escort, the young man may be permitted to take a walk with his *enamorada* ; but to pay his court to her in her

own house would set all the laws of decorum at defiance. Yet there is one place where he is always permitted to see and talk to her alone—at her window or balcony. Beneath this he will be found standing in the long cool summer evenings, after the day's work is over, talking and singing till the last peal of the evening bells has died away, and the stars are peeping down from the cloudless sky overhead. And then, perhaps, after he has parted with his betrothed and her casement is closed for the night, he will return with a band of his companions and serenade her with his verses, while they accompany him on their guitars, a service which he has to render to each of the band in turn till the windows of all their sweethearts have been visited.

It is during these serenades that fresh love couplets are inspired and the old ones repeated; and since it is as rare to find anyone who can write and read among the common people in Spain, as it is to find one who cannot do so in England, it is only by repetition that they can be circulated. But repetition and inspiration are dangerous companions. The man who is capable of improvising a song for himself can seldom be trusted to faithfully reproduce one composed by another. Each singer is apt to throw some of his own personality into the repetition, and reproduce not so much the original words as the sentiment they have

inspired in him. Hence there is a large number of variants of all the most popular couplets ; and the number of versions through which any one has passed may be taken as a fair enough index of its popularity.

We could not better gauge the poetical talent of an individual singer, than by setting him to repeat a song from memory, noting where he deviated from the original, and considering whether these variations were improvements or the reverse. In the same way we might form some estimate of the poetical talent of the Spanish people, if we could observe what variations they would make on a verse which had found its way in amongst them from some known external source. Such a test can actually be applied ; for the composition of *coplas* has been resorted to not unfrequently by cultured poets, and it sometimes happens, when one of these has been peculiarly happy in catching the spirit of the popular muse, that it finds a place for itself alongside of the genuine productions of the people. Rarely, however, can an aristocratic interloper of this sort pass unchallenged. It is likely to contain some feature which is unintelligible, or at any rate would not come naturally to an illiterate composer, and which is sure to be modified as the verse passes from mouth to mouth. It is remarkable that those alterations are in most cases distinct improvements, and argue a keen sense of

that poetical feeling which is born and not made.
Thus the following couplet by Señor Aguilera—

The day that thou wert born, my love,
A piece from Heaven dropped,
And when thou'rt dead and mount again,
Then will the gap be stopped*—

has been found circulating in this altered form :

The day that thou wert born, my love,
A piece from Heaven dropped,
And not before thou'rt dead, my love,
Can yonder gap be stopped.†

Although the distinction cannot be well brought out in a translation, it can hardly be a matter of dispute that the popular version is an improvement on the original.

Next in interest to the love couplets, though far less numerous, are those of religion. Religion has been so powerful a factor in the formation of Spanish literature in its most brilliant era that one feels curious to see what part it plays in modern folk-poetry. But the noble sense of religion which was kept alive by eight centuries of warfare

* El dia que tu naciste
Cayó un pedazo de cielo,
Quando mueres y alla subas
Se tapará el agujero.

† El dia que tu naciste
Cayó un pedazo de cielo,
Hasta que tu no te mueras
No se tapa el agujero.

against an infidel invader differs widely from the bigoted superstition which alone seems to have survived the Inquisition. The Spanish people draw their ideas of sacred things entirely from the images which abound in their churches, and are paraded through the streets in Holy Week. Their conceptions are thus more material than spiritual. The Virgin, who is the most prominent figure in their theogony, is worshipped under various personalities, depending on her various functions, such as the 'Virgin of Peace,' or the 'Virgin of Succour'; or even on some favoured locality, as Ephesus used to be in the case of Diana. So distinct are those different personalities in the popular mind, that in some small villages the 'Virgin of Succour' will have her special adherents who are so jealous of those of the 'Virgin of Peace,' that when the rival processions encounter each other in the street during Holy Week, knives and clubs are not unfrequently resorted to to settle the controversy. The conception of God is correspondingly anthropomorphic. The consequence of this is that His name is mentioned, and His personality introduced in an easy and familiar way, which to us appears nothing short of blasphemy, although no blasphemy is intended. 'More valiant than God,' is a complimentary epithet of the commonest occurrence; while the weather-saws invariably take the form of boldly defying the Deity Himself to

prevent rain in the event of certain atmospheric phenomena having been observed.*

The bulk of the religious couplets is made up of the *saetas*, or verses of greeting, sung to the processions as they pass through the streets in Holy Week. Even in a large modernized town like Seville, a procession is rarely allowed to file through the densely crowded Plaza de la Constitucion without some voice from amongst the crowd of spectators breaking the silence by chanting a verse in praise of the saint whose image is being borne along. The *saetas* do not express any religious sentiment, and are entitled to be classed as religious only because they allude to holy beings. Generally they consist of pictures in miniature of the Holy Family :

The Virgin is washing the clothes at the brook,
And Saint Joseph hangs them to dry.
Saint Ana plays with the Holy Babe,
And the water flows smiling by.†

* Thus, for instance :

Cuando Jablacuz tiene capuz
Y la Pandera Montera,
Llovera aunque Dios no quiere.

If Jablacuz wear his cloak
And La Pandera her cap,
'Twill rain though God wish it not' to.

Jablacuz and La Montera being two mountains near Jaen.

† La Virgen lava la ropa
San José la está teniendo
Santa Ana entretreno al Niño
Y el agua se va riendo.

Folded in His mother's arms
Lulled to sleep the Baby lay.
Even God could not resist
The sweetness of that lullaby.*

It must be admitted that such pictures as these are entirely wanting in religious dignity. They conceive the Virgin and St. Joseph and the Infant Jesus as little different from Spanish peasants, but they paint their conception, such as it is, with no common degree of beauty. The pictures of Murillo, who, if not the greatest Spanish painter, is certainly the most popular, are characterised by the same excellence and the same defect. No one can look upon his Madonnas without being struck by their simple beauty; and yet after all they are but beautiful women beautifully painted. The Madonnas of Raphael, on the other hand, are hardly women at all. They are embodiments of religious passion. It would be desecration to regard them with the mundane admiration that we bestow on those of the Spanish artist.

There are a few couplets which, though they do not specially allude to religious beings, are perhaps more entitled to be called religious than the *saietas*. They express those deep yet vague sentiments of religion that are awakened at times, even in the

* Lo ha dormido entre sus brazos
A aquella que lo parió
Y su canto era tan dulce
Que pudo dormir á Dios.

ignorant peasant when Nature unveils herself to him in all her mysterious grandeur, and ‘disturbs him with the joy of elevated thoughts,’ and he tries in his own rude way to express the mysterious feeling that has taken possession of him.

I wist not what has come o'er me.
 I long for I know not what,
 I speak, but scarce know that I'm speaking,
 I think, but I know not my thought.*

In this we have a touch of that vague mysticism that characterizes the religions of the East ; and which, with the hyperbole of some of the couplets and the melancholy of others, reminds us once again that though the lips of the fountain from which these verses flow, are Spanish, the source lies deep down in the old Moorish days. To this source they remain as true as ever. I doubt if the strange genius of that race that so long filled the peninsula with the glow of Oriental life, reflects itself to-day in anything more truthfully than in this traditional poetry of Spain. The physical monuments of their glory, their mosques, their palaces, their castles are delapidated with the ravishes of time and of man still more destructive ; yet this

* Y no sé lo que me pasa
 No tampoco lo que quiero :
 Digo y no sé lo que digo,
 Siento y no sé lo que siento.

slender stream of poetry, embedded in the nature of the people, flows on always new yet ever old.

Disce hinc quid possit fortuna ; immota labascunt
Et quæ perpetuo sunt fluitura, manent.

The work which is being done by collectors, like Don Rodriguez Marin, is work of the highest value. It is for want of such work that the most of our old English labour songs have been lost. Mr. Carmichael, in his report to the Crofter Commission, tells us how the Scottish Highlanders in bygone times had songs of love, and war, and hunting, and labour-songs with which they accompanied themselves when rowing, shearing, spinning, milking, or grinding at the quern. The spread of education and the effacing hand of progress have wiped out all but the merest traces of them. But in Spain it is different. She is the Rip van Winkle of the European nations. With all her old traditions she has slumbered on through centuries. But for good or for evil the hand of progress is now laid upon her, and she will waken to forget them all as other nations have forgotten them. It is only by recording those couplets now that we can save them from oblivion, and then, unlike the Moor whom Washington Irving found by the fountain in the Alhambra, we will not have to regret so bitterly the times when 'they thought only of love and music and poetry. They made stanzas on every occasion,

and set them all to music. He who could make the best verses, and she who had the most tuneful voice, might be sure of favour and preferment. In those days, if any one asked for bread, the reply was, "Make me a couplet;" and the poorest beggar, if he begged in rhyme, would often be rewarded with a piece of gold.'





A ROYAL MOORISH POET.

‘He who has not seen Seville,’ says the old Spanish proverb, ‘has a marvel yet to see.’ But to him who has seen it, what does its name generally recall? The Fair and the Holy week; gipsies and bull-fighters in their majo costumes; the Cathedral, with its graceful bell-tower; the Seis boys dancing before its altar, or the sublime tones of the ‘Miserere’ echoing through its stately pillars and lofty domes; Murillo’s pictures hanging in the Hospital; the dark-eyed beauties of the Paseo with their mantillas and fans; the gallant, muffled in his capa, standing, guitar in hand, below his lady’s balcony. In a word, the traveller’s associations with Seville are all Spanish, not Moorish.

At Granada we have no difficulty in realizing that we are in the land once ruled by the Moors. The Alhambra stands deserted much as they left it. Even the ruins of Charles’s hideous palace do not prevent us forgetting for a moment, as we stand

within its courts, that four centuries have elapsed since the Crescent gave way to the Cross. But at Seville it is different. To find what is Moorish there, we have to scrape through a thick veneer of Christianity and modern Spain. The Giralda owes much of its character and a third of its height to a Christian belfry. Christian saints look down from their stone niches on either side of the Gate of Pardon, imploring us to forget that its graceful arch was once the entrance to a mosque. The Tower of Gold still stands; but it has been turned to base uses, and its best-known traditions do not go further back than Peter the Cruel.

There remains the Alcazar. It is one of the oldest Moorish relics in Spain; and though the most of what we now see even there is of Christian date, we can still trace a few relics of an Eastern beauty that must once have vied with that of its far younger rival at Granada; while to those who study it more closely in the light of its romantic history, the incongruous Parisian decorations, the ruthless devastations of time, and the still more ruthless restorations of art, will disappear, and the ghost of the old palace come forth as it was in the Middle Ages, long before the Alhambra was dreamt of, when Seville was a great city of the Moors.

It was here, in the spring of the year 1069, that the Moorish king, Al-Motadhed, lay dying. Like

all his contemporaries, he had been a patron of poetry and art, and was even himself a poet of some merit. But culture had failed to soften the ferocity of his character. His deeds had been more like a tiger's than a man's. He drank at his feasts out of cups made from the bejewelled skulls of his victims. His ministers trembled when he spoke ; and well they might, for he had murdered his eldest son, Ismael, in one of his fits of passion ; and the younger, Al-Motamed, who was now to succeed him, had barely escaped the same fate.

At this time the kingdom of Seville was, with the exception of Cordova, the most important of the smaller states that had risen on the ruins of the great Caliphate of the West ; and Cordova was destined soon to fall a prey to its victorious arms. Yet the axe was already at the root of the tree. The descendants of the sturdy band of Christians in the northern part of the Peninsula, which alone had never yielded to the invincible arms of Tarak three hundred years before, were now slowly but steadily reconquering the lands they had lost. A Christian army had once advanced even to the walls of Seville, and Al-Motadhed had saved his royal city only by consenting to the humiliating alternative of paying yearly tribute to the Castilian Prince.

Such was the king, and such the kingdom

to which Al-Motamed now succeeded. It would be difficult to instance a son more differently constituted from his father, or less qualified to rule in times so out of joint. Nature had intended him for a poet ; circumstance alone had made him a king. His training had been such as to develop only his artistic faculties ; for while his brother Ismael, as heir-apparent to the throne, had been associated with his father in all his military adventures, Al-Motamed had spent his youth peacefully as the governor of Silves. Once, indeed, he had been entrusted with the command of an expedition, but his incapacity as a general led to disaster and disgrace. Poetry was the young prince's favourite pastime, poets the companions of his choice ; and for indulging and cultivating such tastes few places were better fitted than the university town of Silves.

Soon after he had been installed as governor, there arrived in the town a young poet called Ben-Amar. He was no stranger, for he had been born and educated in Silves ; but he had left it to perfect himself in his art at Cordova, and after that had wandered about Spain from town to town and court to court, singing songs of love and war, or hymning the praises of any prince who would consent to be his patron. During this apprenticeship he had acquired such skill that his verses now won the enthusiastic admiration of his townsmen in

Silves, and his fame soon reached the palace. Al-Motamed sent for the poet, and from the first day of meeting conceived an attachment for him amounting to infatuation. Ben-Amar became his constant companion, and continued up to his death to play one of the most important parts in this strange drama. The poet's friendship for the prince does not appear ever to have been so confiding as Al-Motamed's for him. Though he was not much older, his wanderings may have given him an experience of life sufficient to warn him that the favour of princes was fickle. One night, it is said, after an evening spent in revelry, Al-Motamed, in excess of favour for his new friend, insisted that he should share his room for the night. While the prince lay sleeping, Ben-Amar was awakened by a vivid dream. He thought a voice called in his ear, 'Beware ! the day will come when his hands will take thy life.' Again he tried to sleep, but again was awakened by the same voice of warning. So vivid was the dream and such his terror, that he rose and fled to the door of the palace, intending to lie there till the day dawned, and then complete his escape. Meanwhile the prince wakened, missed his companion, and immediately instituted a search, which resulted in the discovery of Ben-Amar. Sobered and ashamed, he confessed the cause of his strange behaviour, and Al-Motamed reassured him with

vows of eternal affection, and heaped him with favours, amidst which the dream was soon forgotten. Perhaps no one, but least of all the prince himself, would then have believed that the day would come when it would be fulfilled. But that day was still distant, and for years the selfish ambition of Ben-Amar continued to work the ruin of his blind and indulgent patron.

On succeeding to his father's throne, Al-Motamed offered his friend any post that he chose to name, and Ben-Amar selected the governorship of Silves. It was not without much reluctance that the king consented to the separation this involved, and he very soon recalled his companion to the court of Seville to be his prime-minister. The verses which he addressed to him at parting for Silves show us with what fondness he looked back upon the scenes of his boyhood.

- ‘Bear my greetings, Abu-Bekré,
Unto Silves’ groves and bowers,
Greet Charadjib’s stately palace—
Scenes of all my golden hours.
- ‘Graceful nymphs of alabaster
Stand around yon stately hall ;
Marble lions guard the gateway ;
Greet them for me, greet them all.
- ‘Tell them thou hast left behind thee
One that pines, all sad and lone,
For the scenes that now are distant,
And the days that now are flown.

'Often with my lady, often
Have I sat by Silves' stream,
When the nightingale was singing,
By the star-light's fitful gleam.

'Bulbul ceased his song and listened
When she swept the zitter's strings,
And her flitting fingers glistened,
White as snow-flakes winter brings.

'And she sung of deeds of battle
Till my beating pulses thrilled ;
And she sung love's tender passion
Till with tears my eyes were filled.

'And I quaffed the sparkling wine-cup
Till mad frenzy filled my soul,
With the wine and with the music,
And the kisses that I stole.'

There was another whose influence on the life of Al-Motamed was destined to overshadow even that of Ben-Amar. The story of his meeting with his future queen, though it savours of romance, is quite in keeping with the character of the prince and the times he lived in. One evening, after his return to Seville, he was wandering with Ben-Amar along the bank of the Guadalquivir, near the place where the Silver Tower then stood, and where the Paseo with its handsome quays now affords the favourite promenade to modern Sevillians. A gentle breeze was playing on the surface of the river, ruffling it into a multitude of wavelets that sparkled in the evening sun.

The wind and sun upon the stream
Like burnished mail have made it gleam,'

the prince exclaimed, improvising the first part of a couplet, which he challenged his friend to complete. Ben-Amar hesitated, and before he had time to answer, one of the Moorish girls who had come down to draw water, and stood beside them with her full pitcher balanced on her head, responded to the challenge :

' And were the Frost to lend his aid,
What smith had stronger mail e'er made '

Such readiness in improvising was certain in itself to impress the prince ; but when he turned to the authoress of the couplet and found her looks as attractive as her wit, he fell passionately in love, and ordered her to be conveyed forthwith to the Alcazar. Thither he himself hastened, eager to learn her name and circumstances. She was called Itamid, she told him, and was the slave of Romiac the muleteer. Nothing daunted by her low origin, Al-Motamed determined to buy her liberty and make her his queen. This romantic union did not turn out unhappily. Itamid's constant gaiety and love of music and poetry were well fitted to make her royal husband happy; while her devoted attachment to him in his days of misfortune shows that her nature was not without its noble side. But her caprices and extravagancies were endless, and

the king's indulgence of them was a source of constant scandal to the more serious of his courtiers.

Numerous stories of these have come down to us.* One will suffice as a specimen. The king and queen were in Cordova one February, when there occurred what is still a rare phenomenon in Spain—a shower of snow. The queen stood in a window in the palace watching the snow-flakes fall thick and heavy, till the whole ground was covered with a mantle of dazzling white. After gazing for some time at a scene to her at once so novel and so beautiful, she burst into tears. The king was at her side in a moment, tenderly asking the cause of her grief. ‘Thou dost not love me as I love thee,’ she answered, ‘else hadst thou taken me to some of those far-off lands where they tell me the earth often dons this mantle of spotless snow.’ The king kissed away her tears and assured her that she should have snow in the palace to her heart’s content; and sending over the whole country side, he collected the white blossoms of the almond-trees, then in full bloom, and made his slaves shower them down like snow over the gardens of the palace.

With Itamid for his queen and Ben-Amar for his prime-minister, we can fancy what the court of Al-

* The story of Al-Motamed's reign and subsequent misfortunes is told at length and with great charm by M. Dzoy in his ‘*Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*,’ vol. iv., chaps. ix.-xv.

Motamed soon became. Music was the business of the land, and poetry the language of the people. Ministers rhymed themselves into office, and generals received their commissions in verse. Chroniclers relieved the long lists of names and dates in their dreary chronicles, and merchants the transactions of their business, with scraps of song ; while the poorest peasant, when occasion demanded, could burst into a couplet of his own improvisation. Famous minstrels flocked to Seville from all parts of the Moslem world ; and well they might, for never had monarch been so magnificent in his patronage. A poet who could but prove himself a master in his art might ask any boon without fear of refusal. There once came to Al-Motamed's notice some well-turned verses on man's ingratitude, which maintained that gratitude was as rare as the fabled prince who rewarded a poet with a thousand ducats. ‘ Does such munificence exist but in fable ? ’ the king exclaimed, and sending for the author, he caused the sum to be paid him in full.

In all the galaxy of poets that gathered round the court of Seville none shone brighter than the king himself. Many of his poems have come down to us. Like all Arabian poetry they are strictly lyrical. The Arab mind is wanting in that creative genius that is needed to construct an epic or a narrative poem. It is of the real incidents of life viewed from their poetic side that Arabian poets

treat. Poetry and biography are thus always closely allied, and in the earlier poets inseparable ; and although the ancient models of nomad Arab poetry underwent immense development, and acquired a new element of permanency in the hands of the Spanish Moors, even their poems would lose much of their point when separated from the circumstances that called them forth.

In consequence of this connection between poetry and passing events, the faculty of improvisation was brought to a state of unparalleled perfection amongst the Moors. It was not the rich or the learned alone who cultivated the art ; the poor also practised it as an accomplishment which often brought them much gain. We have seen Itamid improvise herself into a throne, and we might cite scores of instances where less dazzling prizes were thus won.

These improvised verses were remarkable rather for their wit than for their pathos. A well-turned compliment, whether in prose or verse, was reckoned as precious as a work of art, and children were elaborately trained in complimenting as a branch of culture essential to a good education. A story is told of a prince, contemporary with Al-Motamed, going into the house of one of his subjects where he found no one at home but a little boy. Attracted by the brightness of the child, he asked him playfully, ‘ Which house do you think the prettier, your

father's or the palace of the king?' 'My father's,' was the ready reply, 'when the king is in it.' Surprised at such wit, the king determined to try him again, and showing him his diamond ring, asked if anything could be prettier than that. 'The finger that wears it,' answered the precocious little courtier.

Repartee is after all only the obverse of compliment, and Al-Motamed keenly appreciated both. On one occasion a famous robber, who had the reputation of being a Tyll Eulenspiegel of those times, had created a sensation in the town by perpetrating a practical joke while he was actually being crucified. The king ordered this victim of justice to be taken down from the cross and ushered into his presence, where he remonstrated with him, and expressed wonder at such persistence in deeds of lawlessness. 'Did your majesty know the delights of robbing,' replied the brigand, 'you would step down from your throne and join us.' This answer so tickled the king that he found the man a place in his bodyguard, of which he turned out a most efficient member.

Al-Motamed himself was famous for his ready improvisation. When walking through the streets of his capital one day, his attention was attracted by a girl selling wine. In the streets of Damascus or Cairo the wine-sellers may still be heard singing the praises of their wares in highly figurative

language ; and this Moorish girl was inviting the custom of the passers-by with this couplet :

“ Come, drink the cooling wine-draught ;
’Tis by your thirst we live.
Your solid gold we ask for,
Our liquid gold we give.”

The king, catching up the idea, asked to be served with a cup of wine, and improvised this reply :

‘ I said to her, “ Pour forth thy wine,
And this bright gem I’ll give to thee.”
She answered, “ Drink, and so for thine
As bright a gem thou tak’st from me.” ’

Although much of this spontaneous Moorish poetry has passed away unrecorded, and only a few verses come down to us, a faithful echo of it still reverberates in the folk-poetry of modern Spain. The Moorish art of complimenting is but a prototype of the Spanish *requiebro*, and the Spanish *pregones* lineal descendants of these Moorish street-songs in which king and pedlar alike excelled. Nor is this wonderful when we consider the relations that existed between the Spaniards and their conquerors. It must not be forgotten that, though the Moors of Andalusia and the Christians of Castille are engaged at the time I write of in a religious war, the Christians of the South have been for centuries assimilating themselves with their Mussulman rulers. The lot of the Spanish Goths after the Moorish invasion was no worse than

under their own kings. They had their own governors, their own laws, their own judges, and were even allowed to follow their own religion without let or hindrance. In the course of the three centuries which elapsed between the Moorish invasions and the time of Al-Motamed, the contact of the two races had produced a mutually modifying effect. If the Christian subjects of Al-Motamed differed from the soldiers who followed Alphonso, his Moorish subjects had altered as much from their ancestors whom Tarak had led to the conquest of the Peninsula. The change manifested itself even in their garments. The turban is held so sacred by every pious Mussulman, that a special place of honour in his house is reserved for it while he lives ; and it is used as his winding-sheet when he dies. Yet the Spanish Moors did not scruple to discard this sacred vestment for a woollen cap.* Nor did this external change in dress belie the alteration in the character of the wearers. The piety of the earlier Cordovan Khalifs had given way to religious indifference, and the strict code of morals laid down in the Koran was honoured only in the breach. Instead of eschewing wine, they invoked the Muses in its praise, and Seville had acquired a proverbial reputation for its drunken revelry. The descendants of

* ‘Al-Makkari: Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain’ (translated by Gayangos), book ii., chap. i.

the fierce and fanatical warriors who had fought under Tarak had, in fact, developed into the most cultured and most effeminate race of that age. In science, arts, and letters they had so far outstripped their European contemporaries that the universities of Cordova and Seville attracted by their fame scholars from every country in Christendom, and even sent one of their alumni to fill the throne of St. Peter. In this advance their Christian subjects had equally participated. Learned treatises on Christian theology were written in Arabic for the convenience of Moorish Christians ; while for that of Spanish Mussulmans works on Arabian law and religion were composed in Spanish.* The two languages ran side by side throughout the Peninsula, and the two races who spoke them were so thoroughly blended by intermarriage and by mutual interest that the old landmarks which separated Christian and Moor had all but worn away. Hence it is that Oriental blood runs in the veins of every modern Andalusian, and gives to all his doings and sayings a flavour of the East.†

Let us now return to the fortunes of Al-Motamed and his court.

Frederick the Great used to say that if there were any country he wished to ruin, he would put

* Sismondi, 'Littérature du Midi de l'Europe,' vol. i., p. 95.

† In a work entitled 'Tizon de España' ('Brand of Spain') the pedigrees of the proudest families of Spain are traced back to a Jewish or Moorish origin.

its government into the hands of the philosophers. To govern a kingdom by poets is a still more fatal experiment ; yet such was the government of the kingdom of Seville. The wonder is, not that ruin overtook it, but that it came as tardily as it did. The first part of Al-Motamed's reign was marked by an ephemeral prosperity. Cordova was conquered, and for a short time the king of Seville held a sway such as no Moorish sovereign had held since the fall of the Caliphate. But this short prosperity hastened on his final misfortunes, for it excited the jealousy of the Castilian king, who advanced with a powerful army, conquering and devastating the territory he passed through, till he found himself beneath the walls of Seville. Fearing to try the issue by force of arms, Al-Motamed, like his father, resorted to diplomacy, and, by consenting to pay double the former tribute, bought a peace which left him with a sullied prestige and an exhausted treasury. To redeem the one and to replenish the other, Ben-Amar advised him to venture a greater stake by equipping a force against the kingdom of Murcia. The expedition ultimately proved victorious, but it was a victory that cost dearer than defeat ; for by bad generalship and worse diplomacy a whole army was lost and much treasure expended.

At his own request Ben-Amar was appointed governor of the new province. The continued suc-

cess which had raised this man from an obscure wanderer to the highest office in a kingdom which his own policy had done not a little to extend, swelled his vanity till it overwhelmed his reason. He entered his new post with the pomp of a Roman emperor, and once installed, he assumed all the insignia of independent sovereignty. The king at first was inclined to overlook the extravagant conduct of his minister ; and even when he went the length of openly disobeying the royal command, no steps were taken to punish him. But an irreparable breach was slowly opening betwixt the king and his old favourite, and the manner in which the rupture was finally brought about affords a good illustration of the characters of both and the times in which they lived. Ben-Amar issued a manifesto in the form of a poem full of pompous bombast and self-glorification. The king was more amused than displeased at this extraordinary production ; and at a feast in the Alcazar he entertained a brilliant assembly of his courtiers with a witty but not ill-natured parody of it. This was circulated among the courtiers of Seville with much merriment, mingled with not a little spiteful triumph, and it soon reached the ears of Ben-Amar and stung him into fury. He retaliated in an elaborate lampoon full of the most scurrilous abuse and slander, not only of the king himself, but of his queen, whose low origin was made

a special butt for ridicule. To slander Itamid was a sin which Al-Motamed could not pardon even in his favourite. He vowed that the miscreant should expiate the crime with his life, and ordered his arrest ; but when the messengers arrived in Murcia they found that the inhabitants of that province, unable to bear the arrogance and oppression of their governor, had revolted, and Ben-Amar himself had fled. For some time he wandered about Spain, offering his services to every sovereign he knew to be hostile to his former master. But, rejected by all, he fell into the hands of Al-Motamed, and was conveyed a captive to Seville. When introduced into the royal presence, by his loud protestations of penitence he succeeded in obtaining a respite, and there is little doubt his appeal to old memories had such a powerful effect on the king that his life would have been spared. But his unquenchable vanity proved his destruction ; for no sooner was the interview over than he began to boast of his own power and the king's weakness. His rivals at the court were not slow in reporting these boasts to their master, whose patience was now strained beyond endurance. In a paroxysm of rage he hurried to the chamber where the prisoner was confined, and in the heat of the altercation that ensued slew him with his own hand. The dream of Silves was realized.

Meanwhile king and kingdom were fast drifting into the vortex of ruin which was soon to overwhelm them. The mad policy of Ben-Amar and the extravagance of the court had drained the treasury ; and the time had come round when the tribute must again be paid. When the ambassador arrived to collect it the full sum was tendered, but in coins short of the standard weight. The Jew who had been entrusted with the charge of the mission by the Castilian king quickly detected the deception and demanded payment of the deficiency. His astuteness cost him his life.

The murder of an ambassador is an act of treachery which cannot be defended, and Al-Motamed paid dearly for it. The Christians determined to wreak their vengeance not on Seville only but on all the Moslem states of Spain, and advanced with a strength that carried everything before it, and threatened the total expulsion of the Moors from the Peninsula. The Moorish princes were now compelled to bury their mutual animosities in the common fear of extermination ; but weakened by generations of effeminacy, they soon recognised that even in combination they were no match for the trained warriors of Alphonso and the fiery valour of his great champion, the Cid.

There remained but one source of refuge—an appeal to the Moslems of Africa. The king of Seville might well shrink from such a course.

Tradition had it that an astrologer in his father's reign predicted that the dynasty would be destroyed by a race of men not born in Spain; and Al-Motadhed had shrewdly conjectured that the prophecy pointed to the Almoravides. This tribe, but lately emerged from barbarism to adopt the Moslem faith, had already conquered the whole of the North-West of Africa, and it was to their leader, Jusuf-ben-Tashfin, that the Spanish Arabs proposed to appeal for aid. Reluctant as Al-Motamed was to adopt this course, the case was desperate and he was obliged to consent. 'Better be a camel-driver,' said he, 'in African deserts, than a swine-herd in Castille.' Jusuf at once complied, crossed over to Spain, and defeated Alphonso in the great battle of Zalacca. Though he returned to Morocco immediately afterwards, he made it apparent from his first landing that he had not taken up arms from any such disinterested motive as the defence of his co-religionists. In a few months he succeeded in picking a quarrel with the king of Seville, and again crossed to Spain to fight against those whom he had so recently befriended.

City after city succumbed before the invaders, till at length, on May 10th, 1091, they laid siege to Seville itself. Whatever may have been his incapacity as a general, Al-Motamed had no lack of personal courage. It was owing to his valour that the city held out as long and as bravely as it did.

More than once, when a breach had been effected in the walls and the Africans were actually within the town, the king put himself at the head of a picked band of his soldiers and drove them out. But disaster followed disaster, till the enemy could no longer be held at bay. The last struggle was the most desperate of all. The king fought the invaders from street to street, and made a final stand in the Alcazar itself. But fate was against him, and he and his queen and household soon found themselves the captives of the African prince.

A few days afterwards, at the spot which had been the scene of his romantic meeting with Itamid, the dethroned king embarked in the ship that was to convey both of them to an African prison. The people, we are told, crowded to bid the last farewell to their monarch. There was not a dry eye among them as the ship sailed slowly round the bend of the river which soon hid for ever from the view of the captive the city where he had so recently reigned a king.

The misfortunes of Al-Motamed not only sealed his popularity and posthumous fame, but gave to his subsequent poetry that touch of pathos for which it is so remarkable. Poetry was the only solace left him. Every trivial event in the monotony of his captivity called forth a verse, and was viewed through the medium of his own misfortune and tinged with his own melancholy. On the route by

which the captives were marched through Morocco to their prison in Agmat, they passed a place where the country-people had assembled to pray for rain. ‘I saw,’ exclaimed the dethroned monarch—

‘I saw the people praying
The clouds their rain to yield,
“Ah! take my tears,” I told them,
“And water each his field.”’

‘“Well hast thou said,” they answered,
“For more than Heaven’s flood
The tears thou shed’st; but falling,
They mingled fall with blood.”’

Some of his finest poems date from his banishment at Agmat. On the anniversary of the feast of Ramadan, he wrote these pathetic lines :

‘This day had once brought merriment and feasting.
What joy can feast-days bring a captive slave?
My wretched children, starving, cling around me;
O Allah, pity! Grant the bread they crave.

‘With aching heart I stoop to kiss my darlings—
Those cheeks once rosy, now so wan and pale;
Their tender feet, but trained to tread on velvet,
Torn by the jagged pavement of a gaol.

* * * * *

‘A king once I; a thousand vassals waited,
Eager to do my bidding ere I bade.
Now I am slave, and all the world my master—
O kings, your glory’s but a fleeting shade!’

The last days of the banished king were lighted

up by a transient gleam of hope. The poet, Ben-al-labana, who had been one of the friends and courtiers of his glorious days, hastened to the place of his captivity with important tidings. A revolt in his favour had been set on foot in Spain and had already spread to Seville. The captive waited for some months in eager expectation of release. Release came at last, but it came in the form of death. He died in his fiftieth year and was buried at Agmat, where Itamid, the devoted companion of his misfortunes, was soon laid by his side.

More than two centuries after, a Moorish poet who made a pilgrimage to his tomb found it obliterated by time and neglect. But his verses still lived, and must often have echoed through the halls of the Alhambra, long after Seville had ceased to be a Moorish city, when its mosque had changed to a cathedral, and his own Alcazar to the palace of a Christian king.





FREDERI MISTRAL.

STRANGE as it appears to us now, there once was a time when it was thought disgraceful to write in one's native language. Varchi tells us how his father sent him to prison, and kept him on bread and water, for reading works written in the tongue of his country ; and one of the Crusaders who has left us a history of the delivery of Jerusalem, thinks it necessary to excuse his adoption of the vernacular idiom, on the ground that his bishop commanded it as a penance for his sins.

All this has changed, and with good reason too. Latin is no longer the only language of culture, because it has long since ceased to be the only language possessing a great literature of its own. Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe now stand on the same pinnacle as Virgil and Horace, and we Englishmen so far from feeling it a disgrace to write in English, make it our boast that 'Chatham's language is our mother tongue.'

But in our days the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme ; and even a rough peasant's patois is frequently selected as a vehicle for poetry. Our own Robert Burns is the most illustrious exponent of this modern vernacular school. Besides his many Scotch imitators, we have had in England poets like the late Mr. Barnes using the Dorset dialect, while even our Poet Laureate thinks it no indignity to write in English patois and in Irish too. In Germany again we find Reuter and Klaus Groth working in Low German, and without multiplying instances we have Frederi Mistral, the most eminent living poet in France, using the rustic dialect of Provence.

The cause of this outburst of vernacular poetry is not far to seek. From the middle of last century onwards a marked sympathy for the humble classes has been steadily developing amongst the cultured. It has manifested itself in literature and art by an increased interest in cottage life and country scenery. A rich and unworked vein of poetry and romance was discovered in what was most homely and most familiar, and it has ever since been exploited with increasing energy. From contemplating the peasant's life and surroundings, interest and attention were naturally attracted to the patois that he spoke ; and while the vernacular poet was thus furnished with a large and appreciative audience among the cultured classes, the rapid

spread of education among the people themselves widened it in another direction, till in every country authors of no mean merit turned from their own language to some rude patois to find the vehicle best suited to their genius.

The poet who selects a patois rather than the established language of his country, is induced by one or other of two very different reasons. He may do so because he recognises in it the dress best fitted to set off the simplicity of his theme ; as Theocritus did when he preferred a rustic dialect to the polished language of Athens, because its homeliness harmonized with the subject of his idylls. Or, like Mistral and many of the poets we have named along with him, he may regard his patois as an end in itself, and his poetry nothing more than a means towards its development.

The latter motive involves a grave danger of which I shall presently speak ; but it is none the less natural and laudable. A poet may well be ambitious of composing in the rustic dialect that is endeared to him as his very own a work of genius that may transform it into one of the proud fountains of literature.

Fies nobilium tu quoque fontium
Me dicente.

Nor is this ambition any the less intelligible if this dialect is one that has seen better days ; that once

bade fair to take its place among the languages of Europe, but now, disinherited and disgraced to a mere peasant's patois, is fast sinking into oblivion. It is at any time a sad sight to stand helplessly by and see a language dying. It seems like the destruction of a masterpiece of intellect or art—an Alexandrian library burning down before our very eyes. But to see a language that has given great promise cut off in its youth is the most mournful case of all. Our imagination, always generous, dwells upon its possibilities. We set up the broken pillar and think what it might have been.

The history of any of the modern European languages presents one continued record of such untimely fates. Before the present French tongue could establish its supremacy, a number of rival dialects had to be driven from the field. Some of these, like the Breton, have offered a stubborn resistance, and still struggle on in a state of quasi-independence before finally yielding to the inevitable. But of all the dialects which strove for the mastery in France, by far the most interesting is the Languedoc, the language of Provence and of the troubadours. Its history is unique. It rose with almost mysterious suddenness, filled the whole sky with a momentary brilliancy, and then set as suddenly as it had appeared.

The first appearance of the troubadours was in

the tenth century ; with the war of the Albigenses in the thirteenth, their last notes were silenced. In this short period Provençal had grown to be the language *par excellence* of poetry and refinement. The troubadours carried it to every court in Europe. Even in England we owe much to its influence. Chaucer found a model in its literature. Spenser moulded the 'Faëry Queen' on Provençal forms. Petrarch borrowed from it his *terza rima*. Kings vied with each other in the 'gay science.' Frederic Barbarossa, Richard I. of England, the Prince of Orange, the Kings of Aragon and Sicily are but a few of the monarchs who adopted the new culture. Yet this Provençal literature was destined to an end as tragic as its history had been brilliant. In the fierce and bloody crusade against the Albigensian heretics the noble patrons of the 'gay science' were slain, their castles ruined, the troubadours dispersed, and the canzo and sirvente were heard again no more. To exterminate the language was beyond the power even of Simon de Montford's keen sword ; but the literature which had sent life thrilling through its veins was dead, and the history of the Provençal tongue is henceforth one long story of decadence.

In one of his minor poems Mistral thus describes the old castle of Romanin :

* The tower has toppled over and rolled into the moor,
 Till the battlements so lofty lie level with the door.
 The stones that crowned the summit with moss have grown
 green ;
 In sun and rain for years they've lain and paved the deep
 ravine.
 But the box is ever youthful, and ever green the grass ;
 And the oak-tree and the juniper cling round the ruined mass.
 And yonder still are roses ; and tender rosemarine
 Still decks as in the days of yore the courts of Romanin.
 While on the ancient rose-trees the blossoms cluster yet,
 And each to each still whispers the name of sweet Fanette.
 For full five-hundred summers in patience they have blown,
 And waited, ever waited, for their mistress to come home;
 But Fanette has long since passed away like spring-time
 soft and mild,
 And weary with their waiting the roses have run wild.

The roses of Romanin serve as a fitting emblem
 of modern Provence. The troubadours have
 passed away and the language has run wild. It
 has sunk to a rough patois, and till recently it

* L'auturous tourrioun, dins la champino esterlo,
 De tésto a barrula plus bas que la pousterlo ;
 La machicouladuro emé li merlet rous
 Caladon, i' a prouz témis, lou valbre secarous ;
 Mai lou bouis sémpré verd, mai l'erbo sémpré jouino ;
 E l'éuse e lou genèbre, an pouja dins li rouino ;
 E la rosa, peccaire, e lou doux roumanin
 Embaumon coume antan lou claus de Roumanin.
 Li trouvere espandi que tóuti, plan planeto,
 Entre éli redisién lou noum d' Estefaneto,
 Car despièi cinq cents an, prouvesi de sentour,
 De la belle Faneto espéreron lou retour. . . .
 Mai Faneto a passa coume la primavéro,
 E dou längui la rosa es devengudo fero.

could boast of hardly any literature save some coarse songs, the slang of the taverns.

I say hardly any, for there were a few ballads which the old folk sung, marked by a quaintness and beauty that told of great antiquity. Such was 'Magali,' the *aubade* (morning love-song), which Mistral has skilfully adapted in one of the cantos of his 'Mireio.' It is a song of great antiquity, of which several variants obtain in Provence.* The uniformity of its construction renders it capable of infinite extension; and, no doubt, it has been extended according to the varying fancies of successive generations of singers.

† O Magali, mine own, my fairest,
Come to thy casement ; hear my lay.
With tambourin and lute I wait thee,
Singing my love at dawn of day.

Brightly the stars still shine on high,
And sleep the breezes ;
But yonder stars at sight of thee
Shall pale and flee.

* Three variants are given in Montel et Lambert's 'Chants Populaires de Languedoc,' pp. 544-551.

† The music to which this is sung will be found on p. 97.

O Magali, ma tant amado
Mete la tésto au fenestroun !
Escouto un pau aquesto aubado
De tambourin e de vióuloun

Ei plen d'estello, aperamount !
L'auro es toumbado,
Mai lis estello paliran,
Quand te veiran.

Less than the sound of wind that murmurs
 Care I for thee or heed thy lay ;
 I'll be an eel, and in the ocean
 Through the blue waters glide away.

O Magali, if thou dost turn
 Eel in the ocean,
 Then 'tis a fisher I will be
 And fish for thee.

If in the sea thy net thou castest,
 And in its toils I fall a prey,
 I'll be a bird, and to the forest
 On my light pinions fly away.

O Magali, if thou dost turn
 Fowl in the forest,
 Then 'tis a fowler I will be
 And capture thee.

Pas mai que dou murmur di broundo
 De tour aubado ieu fau cas !
 Mai ieu m'envau dins la mar bloundo
 Me faire anguelo de roucas.

O Magali ! se tu te fas
 Lou peis de l'oundo,
 Jéu lou pescaire me ferai
 Te pescarai !

Oh ! mai, se tu te fas pescaire
 Ti vertoulet quand jitaras,
 Jéu me ferai l'aucéu voulaire,
 M'envoularai dins li campas.

O Magali, se tu te fas
 L'aucéu de l'aire
 Jéu lou cassaire me farai
 Te cassarai.

But when thou com'st to search the forest,
And for the birds thy snares to lay,
I'll be a flower, and in the prairie
Lonely and vast I'll hide away.

O Magali, if thou dost turn
Flower in the prairie,
Then 'tis a brooklet clear I'll be
And water thee.

If to a brooklet clear thou turnest,
Wat'ring the flowers that bloom so gay ;
Unto a snow-white cloud I'll change me,
And to the west I'll drift away.

O Magali, if thou dost turn
Cloud in the welkin,
Then 'tis the west-wind I will be
And carry thee.

* * * * *

I perdigau, i bouscarido
Se vènes, tu, cala ti las,
Jeu me farai l'erbo flourido
E m'escoundrai dins li pradas.

O Magali, se tu te fas
Le margarido
Jeu l'aigo lindo me farai
T'arroussari.

Se tu te fas l'aigueto lindo
Jeu me farai lou nivoulas
E leu m'enagnarai ansindo
A l'Americo, perabas !

O Magali, se tu t'envas
Alin is Indo
L'auro de mar jeu me farai,
Te pourtarai !

* * * * *

Vain is thy passion, vain thy pursuit,
 Never a moment shall I stay.
 But in some oak's rough bark I'll guise me,
 And in the dark woods hide away.

O Magali, if thou dost turn
 Oak in the forest,
 Then 'tis the ivy I will be
 And cling to thee.

Wasted will be thy warm embraces,
 Naught but an oak shall them repay ;
 For as a white-veiled nun I'll hie me
 Unto St. Blaize's convent grey.

O Magali, if thou dost turn
 Nun in yon convent,
 Then 'tis the prior I will be
 And pray with thee.

Vai calignaire, courre, courre !
 Jamai, jamai m'agantaras.
 Jéu, de la rusco d'un grand roure
 Me vestirai dins lou bouscas.

O Magali se tu te fas
 L'aubre de moure,
 Jéu lou clot d'èurre me farai
 T'embrassarai.

Se me vos prene à la brasseto
 Ren qu'un viéi chaîne arraparas . . .
 Jéu me farai blanco moungeto
 Dóu monastié dou grand Sant Bias !

O Magali, se tu te fas
 Mounjo blanqueto,
 Jéu, capelan, counfessarai
 E t'ausirai !

Should'st thou once pass yon convent's portals,
 Naught shalt thou find but lifeless clay ;
 Round me the white-veiled sisters weeping,
 As in the grave my corpse they lay.

O Magali, when thou, alas !
 Art dead and silent,
 I'll be the earth that buries thee ;
 Then mine thou'l be.

Now I believe no mocking mean'st thou ;
 Faithful thy vows ; my heart they move.
 Take from mine arm this crystal bangle,
 Wear it in token of my love.

O Magali, see how the stars
 That bright were shining,
 Now thou art come, O Magali
 Turn pale and flee.

Se dóu couvent passes li porto,
 Tóuti li mounjo trouvaras,
 Qu'à moun entour saran pèr orto,
 Car en susàri me veiras !

O Magali se tu te fas
 La pauro morto,
 Adounc la terro me farai
 Aqui t'aurai !

Aro coumence enfin de crèire
 Que noun me parles en risent.
 Vaquì moun aneloun de véire
 Per souvenènço, o bèu jouvent !

O Magali, me fas de bèn !
 Mai tre te véire
 Ve lis estello, o Magali
 Coume an pali !

Even in its rougher and more popular versions no one could mistake this song for the composition of a French peasant. So apparent is its antiquity that a distinguished scholar believed he could hear in it an echo of Anacreon, wafted to Provence by the Greek colonists, who long before Moors and Romans had planted their art, culture and language on the Mediterranean Coast of Gaul. This theory, slenderly supported at the best, is effectually controverted by the existence of variants of the song in other places where Greek influence could not have reached. A very complete version of it is found among the folk-songs of Catalonia, and several of the Spanish couplets re-echo the same sentiment. This would rather indicate a Moorish origin ; and certainly, like the poetry of the troubadours, the song is tinged with some of that hyperbole which characterizes Moorish poetry. But variants crop up in Italy as well as Spain ;* and it is, therefore, most probable

* Francisco Pelay Briz, 'Cansons de la terra,' i., p. 121. Marin, 'Cantos Populares Espanoles,' numbers 1952, 1956, etc. In his notes in vol. ii., p. 403, Señor Marin gives several variants of the song in different languages. See also *ibid.*, vol. v., p. 72. The ode of Anacreon which it is supposed to resemble is Ode xx., 'Εἰς Κόρην, and may be thus translated :

On Phrygian shores Niobe
Was turned to stone, they say ;
And changed into a swallow,
Fair Procne flew away.

that it is neither Greek nor Moorish, but that its germ is a spontaneous folk-song, whose origin is lost in the mists of antiquity, and which has been handed down from Greek to Moor, and from Moor to Provençal, shaped by the spirit of each in turn, till it was evolved into the form in which tradition gave it to our poet.

While I do not think that the song of ‘Magali’ can be traced to a Greek origin, it is nevertheless true that at every turn we come upon some tradition of these early Greek settlers surviving in modern Provence.* We find them not only in the ruins of ancient monuments, but in the sports, in the language, in the very faces of the Provençal peasants themselves. The bull-wrestling, for instance, in which the fierce herdsmen of the Camargue delight to indulge, is a legacy of these Greeks. Mistral has given us a graphic description of the sport in his ‘Mireio.’ Mounted on their unbroken white horses, the

But I would be a looking-glass,
So thou wouldst look on me ;
And I would be a tunic,
So it were worn by thee.
To water fain I'd turn me,
Thy tender limbs to lave.
To be the perfume, Lady,
That scents thy locks I crave ;
The zone that binds thy bosom,
The pearl upon thy throat—
Nay ! I would be a sandal,
If trod on by thy foot.

* An interesting book on this subject has been written by M. Chas. Lenthéric : ‘La Grèce et l’Orient en Province’ : Paris, 1878.

picadores with their lances goad the bull to fury and baffle his repeated charges by their skilful horsemanship till the animal is harassed and fatigued. Then others attack him on foot, seize him by the horns and grapple with him, till at length by sheer strength they throw him over. This is the Greek *κεράτισις*, the horn-wrestling for which Thessaly was famed ; and just as in Thessaly, so in this Greek colony in Southern Gaul, the coins were stamped with a bull in the act of bowing his horns and bending his knee before his victor. The Provençal patois itself is not without records of these Greeks. It would be strange if it were ; for during eight centuries Greek was spoken there, and as late as the sixth century after Christ it was used as the language of the cultured. ‘Down to the rock,’ says Mistral in the dedication of his Provençal dictionary to the people of the South—

‘Down to the rock, my ploughshare has turned up the
mould,
And lo ! the bronze of Romans, of emperors the gold
Now sparkle in the sunshine amidst the sprouting grain.’*

But his ploughshare has unearthed Greek coins as well. In the quarter of Marseilles known as St. Jean, which covers the site of the ancient city, Greek words are constantly turning up in the local

* En terro fin qu’au sistre, a cava moun araire ;
E lou brounze rouman. e l’or dis emperaire
Treluson au soulèu dintre lou blad que sort.

patois. Greek in the ancient world, like English in the modern, was pre-eminently the language of the sea, and to this day the *Sanjanen* fisherman uses it for all the terms connected with his craft. *Brume* (*πρυμνήσια*) is the hawser by which his boat is fastened; *bletzum* (*βλῆτρον*) the nail that fixes it. The noise of the tempest is still *broufounié* (*βραχυφωνία*); while the *Lami* (*λαμία*), the sea-monster whose name Athenian mothers used to still their babes, continues its reign of terror on the Mediterranean shores. Even the features of the Provençal peasantry, particularly in the neighbourhood of Arles, are in themselves a living museum of Greek antiquity. The renowned beauty of the Arlesian women, fittingly set off by the severe simplicity of their *coif* of black ribbons, remains a monument of their sea-loving Greek ancestors, as authentic as those tombs at Alyscamps, where two thousand years ago they were laid to take their last long voyage, with a parting *Εὐπλοι* ('Sail well') carved upon the marble.

It was in this classical district, at the village of Maillane, on a small farm, or *Mas*, which his father had inherited, that Frederi Mistral was born; and if we may judge from the poet's own appearance, his mother must have been a fine specimen of these dark-haired Aphrodites who wear the *coif* of Provence. But my readers will find the best evidence of her beauty in the

pretty story of her first meeting with Mistral's father. He was fifty-four, and a widower at the time—but the poet shall tell the tale himself:

'One year, about St. John's Day, my father, Master Francis Mistral, was in the middle of his cornfields, which a band of reapers were cutting down with their reaping-hooks. They were followed by a number of girls gleaning the wisps of corn that escaped from the rake. Master Francis noticed one of these, prettier than all the rest, who hung back as though she felt ashamed to glean like the others. He went up to her and asked kindly what her name was, and whence she came.'

"'I am the daughter of Etienne Poulinet, the Mayor of Maillane,' she replied, 'and my name is Delaide.'

"'What,' said my father, 'the daughter of Poulinet gleaning!'

"'Master,' she answered, 'we are a large family, six daughters and two sons, and our father, though not ill off, when we ask for any money to spend on dress: 'My girls,' he says, 'if you want new dresses, earn them.' And that is how I come to be gleaning.'

'Six months after this meeting, so like that of Ruth and Boaz, honest Master Francis asked Delaide to be his wife, and I was the fruit of the marriage.'

Stories told us in early childhood by our parents about themselves take a life-long hold of even the

least impressionable, and it is not surprising that this incident should have fixed itself deeply in the poet's fancy. The very first poem he wrote was a harvest scene, and his masterpiece, 'Mireio,' is full of such pictures.

Master Francis Mistral was, as his son tells us, 'a man of the olden time.' Like 'Master Ambrose' (whose character he must have suggested), he had passed an adventurous life, and delighted to beguile the long evenings of the winter with stories of what he had seen and done in the troubled times of the Revolution. But he possessed other traits in common with 'Master Ambrose':

'My father, I should tell you, had a deep faith in religion. Every evening, summer and winter, he conducted prayers aloud; and then, when the evenings grew long, he would read the Bible to his household. Faithful to old customs, he kept Christmas with great pomp, and after piously blessing the Yule-log, he used to talk about his ancestors, and praise their deeds, and even pray for them. He was always contented, good weather or bad; and if at times he heard others complaining of the boisterous winds or torrents of rain: "My good friends," he would say, "He who is above us knows what He is about and what is best for us."'

Nurtured by the stories of his father, and the old Provençal ballads his mother used to sing, the poet passed the first ten years of his life at Maillane,

after which he was sent to a school in Avignon. Here he studied the classics with great eagerness, especially Virgil, of which he often attempted poetical translations. After he had been some years at this school, there came to it a teacher for whom young Mistral formed a friendship, destined to mark a turning-point in his life. Joseph Roumanille was the son of a poor gardener at San Remy, a village not far from Mistral's home. His parents had given him an education beyond their station in life. They could not even speak French ; and it was a desire to impart to his mother the pleasure that some of his favourite French stories and poems had given him, that first suggested to Roumanille the idea of a Neo-Provençal literature.* The enthusiasm of this new acquaintance was, as Mistral says, ‘the dawn that his soul waited for to waken into daylight.’ From that time, the two young men commenced the uninterrupted friendship and the unremitting labour of their life, to restore the Provençal language from its original sources, the *sirventes* and *canzos* of the troubadours, and to make it once again the language of poetry and song.

Mistral's parents had destined him for the legal

* According to Dante, the first to compose in Italian did so because he wished to be understood by a lady who would have found it difficult to follow Latin verses.—‘Vita Nuova,’ chap. xxv.

profession, and, indeed, he went through the necessary course of study for it ; but when a great work fills the mind nothing else can thrive beside it, and his advocate's gown was thrown aside, that his whole attention might be devoted to his life's mission.

Meanwhile the enthusiasm of the two friends spread to others, a society of *felibres* (as they loved to call themselves) was formed, and a magazine of Provençal literature started. Poetical contests, like those of the troubadours, were revived ; and village vied with village in fêting the new poets and encouraging the new poetry.

While some of his minor poems had been produced on these occasions, it was not till seven years afterwards that Mistral completed his masterpiece, 'Mireio.' At first its success hung in the balance. An epic poem in twelve cantos, written in Provençal dialect, and with a peasant hero and heroine ! The critics might well be perplexed. But there was one who neither doubted nor hesitated, and he was the greatest of his time. 'To-day,' writes Lamartine, 'I bring you glad tidings. A great epic poet is born amongst us. The West produces no more such poets ; but from the nature of the South they still spring forth. It is from the sun alone that power flows. A genuine Homeric poet of modern France . . . a poet who creates a language out of a dialect, as Petrarch created Italian, who has transformed a

folk's tongue to a classic.* Such praise from such a source might well inaugurate success. 'Mireio' at once took its place in modern French literature. Gounod has since wedded it to music in an opera ; and translators have attempted to reproduce its beauties in the principal languages of Europe.†

The story which forms the plot of 'Mireio,' is one of those simple dramas of peasant life which furnished Georges Sand with the subjects for her best romances. Vincent, the hero of the poem, is the son of a basket-maker, Master Ambrose, who gives in a hut on the bank of the Rhone. In summer, father and son wander from farm to farm repairing old baskets or making new. It is when on one of these expeditions that they are first introduced to us. They are just approaching the Mas di Falabrego (farm of the lotus-trees), one of the largest farms in the district, which its sturdy owner, Master Ramon, boasts that he has reclaimed by his own industry. His daughter Mireio, a girl of fifteen, the *belle* of the district, is the heroine of the poem. Vincent and his father arrive at the Mas at evening, when

* 'Cours familier de littérature,' Entretien xl.

† Besides a prose translation, by Mr. C. H. Grant (Avignon, 1867), 'Mireio' has been rendered into English verse, by Mr. H. Crichton (London, 1868) and Miss H. W. Preston (Cambridge, Mass., 1885). Neither Mr. Crichton nor Miss Preston has attempted to reproduce the form of stanza in the original.

'The ox plods on his homeward road,
 The ploughman o'er his neck bestrode,
 Holding on high his idle goad,
 And night comes softly stealing from o'er the distant marsh.'*

Mireio is preparing the supper, which is spread *al fresco* on a stone table beneath the trees ; and Master Ambrose and his son are welcomed to a place. When the meal is over the old basket-maker is pressed to sing, and after many excuses at length yields to the entreaties of Mireio and gives them a good old sea-song ; for Master Ambrose has served against the English under Suffren, and, like all old sailors, loves to fight his battles over again. At length the company disperse, and Vincent and Mireio are left together and soon become the best of friends. Vincent, who is only a year older than herself, tells her of all the incidents of his wandering life, how they fish for leeches, of the races he once saw at Nîmes, and, above all, of the wonderful miracles that have been wrought by the 'three Maries' in their rocky chapel at the mouth of the Rhone. In fine, this rustic Desdemona falls a victim to the adventures of the young Othello, and when her mother suggests it is time for bed, she answers :

* E li bouié, sus si coulado,
 Venien plan-plan à la soupado,
 Tenant en l'èr sis aguhiado . . .
 E a niue soumbrejavo alin dins la palun.

' Sleep is for winter, mother dear,
 The summer night is bright and clear ;
 Ah, let me tarry longer here,

For I could pass in listening the evenings of my life.'*

The second canto opens among the mulberry-trees the following morning. Mireio is pulling the leaves for her silkworms when she sees Vincent passing by, and calls him to help her. In a moment he is on the branch beside her; and there they sit talking, just as they had talked the night before, of Vincent's home and of his sister, for he has a sister, and Mireio wishes to hear all about her; and this leads to comparisons which, as usual, are odorous :

' My sister's voice is soft and clear,;
 Its gentle strains I love to hear
 Most when the *Peirounello* she sings with simple art.
 But you—somehow your every tone
 Speaks a sweet music of its own,
 That more than all the songs I've known
 Enchants my ear with listening, and stirs my inmost heart.'[†]

* O maire es un plesi
 De soumiha, l'ivèr ; mai aro
 Per soumiha la niue's trop claro
 Escouten, escouten l'encaro . . .
 Passarieu mi vihado e ma vido à l'ausi !

† De sa voues linjo e clarinello,
 Quand cantavo la Peirounello,
 Ma sorre, aviéu grand gau d'ausi soun douz acord ;
 Mai vous, la mendro resouneto
 Que me digués, o jouveineto !
 Mai que pas ges de cansouneto
 Encanto moun aurihó e bourroulo moun cor.

But meanwhile the work has stood still. Vincent was called to help, and he has only hindered! And for a few minutes both set themselves to plucking the mulberry-leaves with a will. But only for a few minutes; for presently Mireio discovers a nest on the tree, which, to her delight, turns out to be full of young birds. ‘Have you not heard,’ she cries, ‘that when two find a nest in a mulberry-tree they will be married before the year is out?’ Yes, but Vincent remembers that the omen is valid only if the young birds are got safely home; and both apply themselves to this important task. Scarcely, however, has the last of the fledglings been stowed away in Mireio’s bosom, when with a sudden crack the branch they are sitting on gives way; Mireio throws her arms round Vincent’s neck, and both fall to the ground together. Is she hurt? is Vincent’s first thought. No; and yet Mireio cries. Is it her mother’s chiding she fears? No, Mireio is in love; she, the daughter of the rich farmer, in love with him, the son of the poor wandering basket-maker! Vincent fears she is mocking, but she protests, and then he pours out his passion for her with all the eloquence of the hot-blooded South.

* ‘Bid me, if thou doubt’st my love,
Fetch yon star from heaven above,
And neither flood, nor forest, nor fire, my path would check.

* T’ame, o chatouno encantarello
Que se disiés : Vole uno estello ;
I'a ni travès de mar, ni bos, ni gaudre foui,

Up, through snow and cloud ascending,
 Crag o'er crag in piles unending ;
 Up, where earth and sky are blending,
 I'd clamber, and next Sunday thou'dst wear it round thy
 neck.'

The third canto does not carry the story much further on, but it is full of sunshine and mulberry-leaves, and in it is introduced the beautiful ballad of 'Magali,' to which I have already referred.

A girl with the face and fortune of Mireio is sure to have plenty of suitors, and the next two cantos introduce us to some of them. First comes Alari, the shepherd, owner of a thousand sheep. But the flocks and herds of Alari have no attraction for the proud Mireio, who cares not whether she marry baron or basket-maker, so he be the man she loves. Nor does Veran, the horse-breeder, fare any better, though he has taken the precaution of securing Master Ramon's favour for his suit. The third suitor is more formidable. Ourias, the bull-brander of Camargue, is the dark character of the poem. We have a vivid picture of the dangers of his occupation, and especially of a terrible tussle he once had with a herd of bulls, when he nearly lost his life, and of which he still bears the scars. But Ourias, though bold, is a bully, and his manners

I'a ni bourrèu, ni fio, ni ferre
 Que m'aplantesse ! Au bout di serre,
 Toucant lou cèu, l'anariéu querre,
 E Dimenche l'auriés, pendoulado à toun coui.

are as rough as his calling. He is not the man to please the gentle Mireio, and when he rides up to the Mas to urge his suit, and finds her a picture of rustic beauty standing bare-footed in the brook washing her cheese-plates, she shows him at once that his attentions will not be received. Unaccustomed to such rebuffs, Ourias rides away in a towering passion, and by an evil fate meets Vincent on his way to the Mas. He rightly divines that he is now face to face with his rival, and by speaking insultingly of Mireio, goads Vincent on to fight. After a long struggle Vincent throws his opponent, but Ourias, maddened with rage, leaps up, seizes his bull-spear, stabs Vincent, and leaves him for dead.

The murderer rides off as fast as his horse can carry him, and reaches the Rhone at nightfall. Then comes one of the most striking episodes of the poem. He sees a ferry-boat and hails it ; and a ferryman of weird and unearthly mien bids him embark, while his horse swims behind. Scarce has the boat left the bank, when it begins to rock and sway as though grasped by invisible hands. ‘ We have a murderer on board,’ says the ferryman, and the water pours into the boat, which the terrified Ourias struggles in vain to bale. It is St. Medard’s Eve, the ferryman reminds him, when the spirits dance on the waters, and the ghosts of the drowned once more walk the earth ; and even while he speaks, the ghastly procession begins to

rise from the river—men and maidens, old and young, shaking the mud from their dripping garments.

* See yon group of ghosts that glide
Wailing by the water's side !

These were gentle maidens love had driven mad.
Heartless lovers false had played them,
Won their love and then betrayed them ;
To the Rhone they came and prayed him
In his watery bosom to bury hearts so sad.

Wretched maidens, hapless plight !
In the silence of the night,
The throbbing of their bosoms midst rustling weeds one
hears ;
Weeds that to their dripping tresses
Cling, and hide their haggard faces
From the gaze that vainly traces
If it be only water that drops, or bitter tears.

It is their doom to wander on the earth seeking
for the good deeds they have done during their

* Ve ! regardo aquéu vòu qu'esquiho,
Descounoula, sus li graviho . . .
Es li belli chatouno, es li folo d'amour
Que, de se veire separado
De l'ome ama, desesperado,
An demanda la retirado
Au Rone, pèr nega soun inmènso doulour !
Velèi ! O pàuri pichounello !
Dins la sournuro clarinello,
Boulegon, si sen nus, em'un tau rangoulun
Souto l'ango que li mascaro,
Que, de soun péu neblant sa caro
A long trachèu, jéu doute encaro
S'es d'aigo que regoulo, o s'es l'amar plourun.

lives ; and when they have culled enough, these turn to flowers and bear their spirits up to Paradise. The boat meanwhile is sinking fast and the ghosts gather thicker around it. The terrified horse breaks his halter and is carried down the stream. His master, in a frenzy of despair, implores the ferryman for aid. ‘The ghosts will throw a cable,’ he replies, and as he speaks the boat sinks. Then there stretches across the stream a beam of light as fine as gossamer. The ferryman clings to it, but, like a phantom, it eludes the grasp of Ourias and the dark waters close over his head.

No description can give an adequate idea of the effectiveness of this scene or the art with which its weird horror is worked up to a climax. Far less skilful, however, is the handling of the supernatural in the next canto, which describes how Mireio takes Vincent to the cave of a witch who heals his wound.

But the three following cantos take us on to surer ground. We are once more at the Mas di Falabrego. Vincent and his sister have with difficulty persuaded their father to go to Master Ramon and declare his son’s love for Mireio and ask her in marriage. The old basket-maker arrives at the Mas on St. John’s Eve, just as the labourers have finished supper and gone to make the bonfire. After some preliminary talk he reveals the purpose of his visit, but the rich

farmer scouts the proposal with indignation and heaps the old man with abuse and insults. They part with high words, just as the bonfire bursts into flame and sheds its lurid light over the farm, an omen of the troubles that are to follow.

And now the story is fast approaching its climax. Mireio is broken-hearted at the loss of Vincent and the harshness of her parents, and in her despair remembers how he had once told her if ever she were in trouble to consult the ‘three Maries’ in their rocky chapel at the mouth of the Rhone. After dark, when all are sleeping, she steals away, bent on this pilgrimage, and walks all that night and all the next day with the bright sun beating on her head, till she falls fainting on the sand. On recovering, she has only strength enough left to drag herself to the chapel. There the three saints appear to her in a vision, and after telling her their story, promise her a place in Paradise. Meanwhile, Mireio has been missed at the Mas and her course traced. Her parents, distracted with remorse and grief, hurry to the chapel, where Vincent soon joins them, but only in time to bid her a last farewell and see her die.

Such is a rough outline of the plot of ‘Mireio,’ but the plot is its least important part. It is little more than a fragile warp into which the poet has woven the bright local colouring of Provence. Even the characters themselves, Mireio, Vincent,

Master Ambrose, though drawn with a master hand, are kept subservient to the rest of the canvas. They are not the real subject of the picture, but rather accessories placed there to explain and illustrate, as a skilful artist paints a butterfly on a spray of blossom, or a heron on a lonely marsh. The real subject is Provence itself: Provence with its swift dark river, its green mulberries and golden grain, the tales its peasants tell of saint and goblin, and all the traditional vestiges of song and story with which troubadour, Saracen, Roman and Greek have enriched this historic land.

The best parts of the poem are its digressions. There is not one of these we could spare, however it may seem to hamper the progress of the story; unless it be the visit to the witch's cave, which is laboured and impossible, and savours too strongly of a caricature of Dante or Virgil. Some may also condemn the history of the three Maries, which is a little dreary, and not a little long. But one must be Provençal to appreciate the sacredness of this legend and the faith attached to it. Even grave antiquarians speculate on the probability of Lazarus and his sisters, when refugees from Bethany, having landed on these shores. But if the poet has wearied us with his witch and his Maries, he has more than atoned for both in the episode of Mireio's meeting with the snail-gatherer Andreloun. The little boy's story of the threshing-floor below the waves has all

the peculiar charm of a genuine folk-tale—a tale of which we find a version wherever there is a sea-coast moulded by tradition into harmony with local features, and with the ideas of the simple folk who tell and who believe it.

It is Mistral's habit never to compose a verse without having some musical air echoing in his mind, which moulds the form of his composition, if it does not influence its subject. The cantos of 'Mireio' are thus literally songs. The second, with its recurring chorus,

'Cantas Cantas Magnanarello,'

is a happy instance of this ballad treatment.

But it is the perfect naïveté of the poem, in subject, in style, and in language, which constitutes its cardinal charm. A peasant girl loves a peasant lad, and dies of it. No story could be simpler, and the way it is told is simple to the verge of childishness. The gray lizards look out of their holes, and speculate on Mireio's haste as she passes along in the scorching sun on her fatal pilgrimage. The ripe ears of wheat talk to each other, and wonder when the reapers will come to cut them. We have the old anthropomorphism of the fairy-tales, where the birds and beasts and trees each take their place among the *dramatis personaæ*, and rejoice or mourn with the hero, like the chorus of a Greek play. The success of this treatment stands out in con-

trast with the few passages where the poet seems to be suddenly disturbed by the recollection that he has aspired to be ‘a humble follower of Homer,’ and indulges in an invocation to the Muses, or forgets for a moment—it is only for a moment—that Vincent fighting with Ourias is not Achilles battling with Hector, nor Alari, the Provençal shepherd, one of the elegant dilettanti of an Eclogue.

It is for want of this rustic simplicity of style and subject that Mistral’s later narrative poems, ‘Calendau’ and ‘Nerto,’ have been so much less successful. ‘Nerto’ is an historical epic. Its characters are popes and knights and chatelaines. The scenes are laid in the ancient palace of Avignon, the castle of Château-Renard, and Arles with its romantic Alyscamps. The story itself harmonizes with these ancient scenes, and has been aptly compared by a French critic to a daintily-painted Missal. The hero of ‘Calendau,’ it is true, lives among the fisher-folk, who are portrayed with all the poet’s genius, but Calendau himself is a semi-supernatural being, and the whole story is wrapped up in an imaginative mystery, from which we turn again with a sense of relief to plain Master Ambrose with his sailor-songs, and the boy-and-girl courtship of Vincent and Mireio.

And yet, were it only a matter of reading the French translation *en regard* (with which all Mistral’s poems are conveniently provided), many might

prefer 'Nerto' to 'Mireio,' for as a story it is more interesting. This suggests the question, Why should 'Nerto' and 'Calendau' be written in Provençal dialect at all? In the coarse ballads of modern Provençal street-singers there is an ingenious tradition whereby angels and superior persons are made to speak French, while the Provençal patois is considered good enough for ordinary mortals. Now the dignity of the persons in 'Nerto' and 'Calendau' is such, that the patois which so admirably suited the humbler characters of 'Mireio' seems incongruous in their mouths. The only excuse for writing such poems as 'Nerto' and 'Calendau' in the rustic Provençal dialect is their local connection with Provence. Local they certainly are, for the scene of both poems is laid there; but there is a wide difference between local and rustic. They stand to 'Mireio' in much the same relation as the 'Lady of the Lake' does to 'Tam o' Shanter.' Were the latter written in English it would lose much; were the former translated into Lowland Scotch it would gain nothing.

I have already referred to the danger that threatens all poets whose prime motive is that of ennobling a cherished patois. Their enthusiasm deludes them into applying it to subjects for which it is utterly inadequate. Their wooden shoes once on, they run to the drawing-room and attempt to dance a stately minuet. The preface to the first

edition of ‘Mireio’ even went the length of seriously predicting the speedy triumph of Provençal over French ; and though such a delusion may call a smile to our lips, it should not be a smile of scorn. Let us remember that many another mind has been similarly bewitched. We shall find Klaus Groth still cherishing the hope that Platt Deutsch will yet overthrow her usurping High German sister, and reign supreme the language of the Teutonic race. And who that have done as much for their patois as these have done, can be blamed for loving it as well ?

But with Mistral this love has still further played the siren. It has lured him away from poetry altogether, into the arid quicksands of philology, and wasted four years of the precious life of a poet on the compilation of two huge tomes of a Provençal dictionary. I do not wonder that philologists should turn with interest to the Provençal dialect, although, when one hears of a German Professor announcing a course of lectures on the ‘Etymology of the second Canto of Mireio,’ it sounds a little like analyzing the Marble Faun of Praxiteles into its elements of calcium, oxygen, and carbon. But if this must be done, are there not philologists enough to do the work ? Why must we sacrifice so rare a creation of God as a genuine poet to recruit their ranks ? One canto of ‘Mireio’ will do more to galvanize the Provençal dialect than a score of dictionaries ; and even if it did not, the mission of a poet like

Mistral is surely higher than the momentary rescue of a patois from ultimate oblivion.

Besides the three narrative poems to which I have alluded, Mistral has published under the rather fanciful title of 'Golden Islands' ('*Lis Isclo d'Or*') a collection of shorter pieces. These have been composed at various times and in various styles; and some of them, such as the powerful 'Hymn to the Sun' ('*Lou cant d'ou Souléu*'), 'The Boat' ('*Lou Bastimen*'), and the quaint little poem 'The Crickets' ('*Li Grihet*'), are of the highest merit. I must pass over these, however, to notice 'The Drummer of Arcola' ('*Lou Tambour d'Arcolo*') which, as well as being the longest in the collection, derives a special interest from the circumstances under which it was composed.

Soon after the publication of 'Mireio,' some political refugees from Spain crossed the Pyrenees and sought a temporary retreat in Avignon. Among these was a statesman of some mark, Don Victor Balaguer. He was a poet, too, a Catalan by birth, and had set himself the task of accomplishing for the poetry of Catalonia the very thing that Mistral was struggling to do for that of Provence. Chance threw the two enthusiasts together, and a friendship ensued not only between Mistral and Balaguer, but between the whole of the Provençal and Catalan poets. No sooner were the troubles over in Spain, than this new alliance was inaugurated by

a fête given to the Provençal poets at Barcelona ; while they in their turn invited the Catalans to a great poetic festival at St. Remy. It was at this latter that Mistral recited the 'Drummer of Arcola.'

The hero of this famous episode in the Napoleonic wars was, it appears, a native of Cadenet, in Provence. The poem is in three parts, the first of which is a short prologue. The story begins with the second :

* A drummer-boy with the troops has marched
 To fight with the Austrian foe,
 With zeal for the Great Republic,
 His young heart all aglow.
 He is only a little country lad
 From his village fresh enrolled ;
 For these are days when they've all to fight,
 The young as well as the old.
 Ah ! they march as straight as lilies
 While the world it stands defied,
 For though all the world's against them now
 They've freedom upon their side.

* A l' armado Italico
 I' a'n pichounet tambour
 Que pèr la Republico
 Boumbounejo d' amour.
 Es un verme de terro
 Sourti de Cadenet ;
 Mai aro van en guerro,
 Li grand e li nanet.
 Marchon dre coume d'iéli
 Lou mounde es espanta
 Lou mounde es tout contro éli
 Mai an la liberta !

And loud the cannons thunder
 And the hungry ravens scream,
 As army against army stands
 On either side of the stream.

For rivers deep and mountains
 Till now have barred the way,
 But yonder at Arcolia's bridge
 The hosts will join to-day.

With cannons four, the foeman
 Has vowed the bridge to hold,
 But we have hearts within our breasts
 That beat defiance bold.

Forward ! Forward ! the first brigade
 Plunge in the smoke and flame.
 Full many a brave lad entered there
 But never a one there came.

Brusisson li chamado
 Li courpatas an fam.
 Armado contro armado
 A l'endavans se van.

Li ribiero li colo
 Vènon li separa ;
 Oh ! mai lou pont d'Arcolo
 Vuei li reünira

Pèr quatre couloubrino
 Es defendu lou pont ;
 Oh ! mai dins li peitrino
 I' a'n cor que ie respond

Ai ! la proumiero tiero
 Que vò passa lou riau
 Cabusso touto entiero
 Dius lou tron e l'uiau

Forward ! Forward ! the second, too,
Advance with steady tread,
But louder only the cannon's roar,
And higher the heaps of dead.

Now see ! 'Tis glorious Bonaparte :
Our banner he displays,
And holding high his sword o'erhead,
'We must carry the bridge,' he says.

'Grenadiers, advance !' the brave
Stand still with downcast eyes :
Two whole brigades have perished there,
'Tis death to the next that tries.

What, France, thou land of liberty !
The tyrant's terror thou !
Are all thy sons that were once so brave
To falter before death now ?

La segundo bregado
Que sus lou pont paréis
Ai ! ai ! embrenigado
I mort vèn faire crèis.

Trelusént Bonaparte
Aganto lou drapèu :
'Lou pont, dis fau que parte !'
E l'espaso au capèu.

'Granadié zou !' Abaïsson
La tèsto li plus fort,
E, sournaru se laisson
Escarni pèr lou sort.

Adouc, Franço erouïco
Ti fiéu vuei calaran
Ti fiéu, O Republico
Espaime di tiran !

No ! There is still yon little lad
 Whom fear has not struck dumb.
 See how his tiny figure bends
 So eager over his drum.

Beating, beating with heart and soul,
 Beating a bold advance,
 He runs to the head and he takes the lead
 From the generals of France.

He is only a little drummer-boy,
 But his drum beats brave and loud ;
 It beats of Freedom ; it beats of France,
 Of her honour and glory proud.

And it beats of the old folks left behind,
 And of sweethearts, too, and wives,
 And of corn-fields and of cottage homes,
 That are dearer far than our lives.

Noun ! un enfant de troupo
 Perdu dins lou coumbour
 Un enfant, vès, se groupo,
 Ardènt, à soun tambour ;

Esglaria l'amo en festo
 Batènt, batènt lou rau,
 Cour se metre à la tèsto
 Davans lou generau.

Noun es qu'uно bouscarlo
 Pauret ! mai soun tambour
 Terrible parlo, e parlo
 De liberta, d'ounour

En coulèro, en furlo
 Parlo de vièti, de fiéu,
 Parlo di la patrio
 E fai dreissa li péu.



And many a well scarred veteran
His eye with a tear it fills,
And many a bold young grenadier
His blood through his veins it thrills.

Beating, beating with might and main,
Beating a furious charge,
He leads them, drags them, hurries them on
Pell-mell to the bridge's marge.

With bayonets fixed and a rush and a shout,
Through the smoke and the din and the dead,
They charge right up to the cannon's mouth
With the drummer still at their head.

Wildly singing the 'Marseillaise'—
That song of Freedom born—
The foeman's gunners they've all cut down,
And the bridge they've carried by storm.

E bieu jouvent que trenon
E plouron quatecant,
E vièi sóudard que renon
Souto si catagan.

Batènt, batènt la cargo,
Ensen li fai boumbi,
Li buto, lis alargo,
Fourro—bourro, enebi.

Dins l'esparrado sourno
Que trono sus lou pont,
L'armado s'enca'sourno,
A boudre, touto en front ;

Cantant la 'Marsiheso'
Cantant la liberta,
Per l' armado franceso
Lou pont es empourta.

And now in different metre the third part commences by telling us how the drummer-boy became a seven days' wonder. The story of his bravery spread far and wide, and the little hero of Arcola formed the theme of picture and song; while to crown all, Napoleon himself called him out in front of the army and presented him with two drumsticks of ivory and gold.

But more momentous events were soon to fill the mouth of fame:

Then in its triumph the era of war

Burst upon Europe. The hoarse cannon roared
From sun-beaten Tagus to Oceans of ice.

Over the nations the proud eagle soared;
And faint in the sun of Imperial day,
The star of the drummer had faded away.

And the Rhone flowed on, and the Rhone flowed on.

Now all Europe shook with the Emperor's fall
(He who grasps all must the penalty pay);

And there came and there went kings great and kings small.
But the drummer—a nutshell—still floated on
While the floods were engulfing Empire and Throne.

Pièi triounfalamen l'èro marcialo
Au rounfia di canoun, se desplegué ;
Dòu Tage souleious i mar glacialo,
L'aiglo sus li nacioun esbarluguè ;
E dins li resplendour emperialo
L'estello dòu tambour s'esvalegué
Piei passè d'aigo au Rone, e d'aigo au Rone ;
L'Empéri cspetaclous toumbè soubran,
(Qu vou tout engloui, fau que n'i en cose) ;
Passè, passè de rèi, pichoun e grand . . .
E lou tambour nadè, cruveu de nose,
Sus l'aprousoundimen di soubeiran.

At length, the wars over, we find the boy hero
of Arcola now turned a gray-haired veteran. One
day, as he wanders through the streets of Paris
poor and neglected, he recalls the events of his
stormy but thankless life, how—

Laying aside the soft languor of love
His country to serve, he had risked life and limb ;
His comrades in battle to victory led,
Aye, led, too, to honours and glory by him—
Massina from Nice filling History's book,
Lannes, the poor Gascon, raised to a Duke ;
John Bernadotte made king of the Swedes ;
Murat, of Naples. All the world rings
With Bonaparte, Emperor, under his heel
Crushing contemptuous countries and kings.
But the drummer, alas ! at the end of the day
Remains but a drummer. Such the world's way !

And with tears in his eyes, he thought of approaching old age, poverty and solitude ; and how much better it would have been to have settled in his native village and ended his days in peace and

Oublidant de l'amour lou languitòri,
Per ama soun païs à cors perdu ;
So coumpagnoun de guerro, à la vitòri,
Au coumoulun d'ounour, pèr éu coundu :
Massena lou Niçard taint l'istòri
E Lanno lou Gascouen devenent du ;
Rèi di Suedo, amount, Jan Bernadotto ;
Rèi di Naple, Murat lou Caoursin ;
Bonaparte emperaire, emé sa boto
Caucant nacioun e rèi coume rasin ;
E lou paure tambour, après la voto,
Tambour coume davans . . . Acò s'ansin !

domestic happiness. With these gloomy reflections he chanced to stray in front of the newly erected Pantheon with its groups of statuary and sculptured frieze. There a passing comrade, recognising the old drummer, told him to look up. He raised his head—

And the veteran saw with its stately dome
The Pantheon, rising against the blue sky.
And lo! cut in marble, with shako and drum,
Beating the charge o'er the city so high,
Himself—drawn to life, in the hour of his pride,
With Napoleon, the Emperor, close by his side.

Filled once again with the frenzy of fame
At the sight of himself among heroes sublime,
High up in glory, and azure and gold,
High in the clouds beyond tempest and time,
A spasm through his heart of wild ecstasy sped.
He reeled, and fell on the pavement—dead.

Not the least interesting part of the ‘Isclo d’Or’ is the autobiographical sketch with which it is

Quand lou sóudard veguè ’me sa coupolo
S’aura dins lou céu lou Panteon
E qu’emé soun tambaur à la brincolo
Batènt lou rau, come s’ero de bon
Eu se reconueiguè, l’enfant d’Arcolo
Amount contro lou grand Napoleon.

Embriga de soun proumié foulige,
En se vesènt tant aut en plen relèu,
Sus lis an, sus li niéu, sus lis aurige,
Dins la glòri, l’azur e lou soulèu
Sentigué dins soun cor un dous gounflige,
E rede-mort toumbè sus lou carréu.



prefaced, and from which I have already quoted. Mistral still lives at Millaine ; but he has long since exchanged for a more modern dwelling the old paternal *Mas di Falabrego* immortalized in ‘*Mireio*.’ Millaine is some twelve miles’ drive from Avignon, across the Durance and over a wide plain as rich by nature as by historical association. Conspicuous on the distant horizon, on the east rise the twin towers of Chateau-Renard, while on a lofty eminence in the north stands Avignon encircled by its walls and battlements. These must still look much as they did to Nerto and her gay company while they rode across this plain on their way to Arles. But to-day the road passes through a succession of prosperous villages, and well-to-do farms nestling in rich orchards of olive, and almond and mulberry trees, till at last we stop in the midst of a village whose houses look bigger and better than the rest, and are told we are in Millaine. The villagers eagerly point out to us the house of ‘Master Frederi’; for he is the hero of the country-side from Arles to Avignon, and they consider it only his due that the stranger should come to worship at his shrine. A sunny shrine it is, well fitted for such a cult. Those who have visited it will not soon forget the handsome face and manly figure of its master, overflowing with hospitality and high spirits, nor of its beautiful mistress, an ideal ‘*Mireio*’ grown to womanhood.

While there recently I saw the manuscript of his latest work. It is a play entitled 'Queen Joan' (*La Reino Jano*), a subject which had already inspired one of his poems; and probably it will appear ere long on the boards of a Parisian theatre. 'You see,' he said, addressing himself to one of the ladies of our party, while I was turning over the leaves of his clearly written, flawless manuscript—' You see I am in love with this Queen Joan,' and with flashing eyes he launched forth into an eloquent vindication of her character ; for like our own Mary Stuart she has suffered somewhat from the ungallant researches of modern historical critics. But whatever place 'Queen Joan' may hold in the poet's heart, she will not easily replace 'Mireio' in our own ; for whether he succeed in winning our allegiance for his royal heroine or not, he has already achieved a rarer and a better work ; he has shown us as few before him have ever done, that the heart of man is none the less noble because it beats in a cottage, nor the tale of love less touching because told in rustic words.



Magali.

PROVENÇAL AUBADE.

ARRANGED BY FR. SEGUIN.

Allegretto.

O Ma - ga - li, ma tant a - ma - do, Me - te la
 O Ma - ga - li, mine own, my fair - est, Come to thy

tèsto au fe - nes - trou! Escouto un pau questo an-
 case-ment: Hear my lay! With tam-bo - rin and lute I

ba - do De tam-bourin e de viou - loun Ei pien d'es-
wait thoe, Sing-ing my love at dawn of Bright-ly the

tello, a - pe - ra-mount ! L'auro es toum - ba - do, Mai lis es-
stars still shine on high, And sleep the breez - es; But yonder

tel - lo pa - li - ran, Quand te vei - ran.
stars at sight of thee Shall pale and flee.



KLAUS GROTH.

A BOOK of poems published in Germany upwards of thirty years ago, which has passed through a large number of editions, both plain and illustrated, rarely escapes notice in England. Yet I venture to predict that the name of ‘Quickborn’ and of its author, Klaus Groth, will be heard for the first time by many. Nor is the reason of this anomaly far to seek. The Low-German dialect in which these poems are written is one with which few English readers are likely to be familiar; and so closely is the charm of the poetry connected with the homeliness of the dialect, that any translation must necessarily fail to catch it.

Away in the extreme north-west corner of the German Empire, between the estuaries of the Elbe and the Eider, lies a small tract of country called the Ditmarsch. It is inhabited by a people who have been remarkable from the earliest times for their courage and love of freedom. Up to the



year 1559 they maintained their independence, in defiance of all the surrounding powers ; and only after a struggle, which lasted for centuries, did they finally succumb to the yoke of Denmark.

The whole of the Ditmarsch is more or less flat, but it comprises two distinct divisions which differ widely in this respect. The eastern division, known as the 'Geest,' might be called the Highlands of the Ditmarsch ; although such a term can be used only relatively, for its hills are low and scantily wooded. The greater part of it is covered with large tracts of barren heath, abounding in *Daepels*, or underground streams, which appear on the surface and run along for a few yards, only to disappear again as mysteriously as they issued. Far richer is the 'Marsch,' or western division, which lies along the sea-coast. It is from its dairies that a great deal of the renowned Kiel butter finds its way to our English breakfast-tables. The whole country here is perfectly flat. Not a single eminence is to be seen as far as the eye can reach, except two mounds away on the east, which were thrown up as refuge for the people when the sea broke in on the land; and a long monotonous line on the western horizon, which marks the dyke, built to prevent the recurrence of a like catastrophe. A network of ditches, wide and narrow, divides the whole country into farms, and the farms into fields. The farmhouses of the

Ditmarsch are of a type quite peculiar to the place. So low are the walls, and so far do the huge thatched roofs slouch over them, that it is only after a close examination that we can convince ourselves that there are any walls at all.

It was in one of these quaint cottages, in the village of Heide, just on the margin of Marsch and Geest, that Hartwig Groth, the poet's father, lived, and Klaus himself was born. A happier household than the Groths' could hardly have been found in all the Ditmarsch. Here there lived Hartwig with his wife and family of four sons and a daughter, while the group was completed by the grandfather (*de Obbe*), a character of the greatest interest. Klaus was his favourite grandchild, always on his knee in the evening, or trotting along beside him in the fields, and eagerly drinking in all his stories of the old heroes who had bled for the freedom of the Ditmarsch. Hartwig Groth was not rich. He had often to keep his son away from school to help with the farm-work; but he was an industrious, well-to-do man, and had always succeeded in the struggle against poverty, so that his family were spared from its souring, blighting influence. A happy childhood is often the making of a happy life. It forms a healthy disposition which enables us to fight life's battles cheerily, and lays up a store of sunshine that lights us in darker days. To this cottage home, with its inmates and

surroundings, the poet constantly reverts with pleasure ; and the result of his travels in after-life is only to bring him back to it more fully persuaded that no spot on earth can compare with it.

- * 'The little field before our door,
How sweet a spot that was !
Down there at early morn I ran
Above my knees in grass.'
- 'I played there till the evening came
Amongst the stones and sand ;
Then grandfather would fetch me in,
So kindly, hand in hand.'
- 'I often wished I were grown up
The great wide world to see :
The old man shook his head and sighed,—
"Tis time enough," said he.'
- 'Ah, so it was ! This great wide world
I've wandered o'er and o'er.
Oh ! would it were but half so sweet
As yon one at our door !'

* De Weg an unsen Tun hentlank
Dar weer dat wunnerschön !
Dar weer des Morns min ersten Gank
Int Gras bet anne Kneen.
Dar spel ik bet to Schummern hin,
Dar gev dat Steen un Sand ;
Des Abends hal mi Obbe rin
Und harr mi bi de Hand.
Denn wünsch ik mi, ik weer so grot,
Dat ik der raeuer sehn,
Un Obbe meen, un schütt den Hot
Dat keem noch vels to fröh.
Dat keem so wit, ik heff se sehn,
De Welt dar buten vaer :
Ik wull se weer man half so schön,
As do min Platz vaer Daer.

In his sixteenth year Klaus left his father's house to become secretary to a neighbouring country magistrate. He had not been long in this situation when his ardent love of study inspired him with the desire of educating himself for a teacher. With this purpose, he entered the seminary in Tondern, where he passed the examinations with brilliant success, and was appointed schoolmaster in Heide, his native village. Here, under the old roof, and with all the old surroundings, began a long period of happy tranquillity. During this time, in his strolls about the neighbourhood, his visits to his uncles at Tillingstedt, and his intercourse with the neighbours at Heide, he acquired that keen insight into the Ditmarsch peasant's life which so strongly marks his writings. He has given us a peep of his life at this period :

'Often when I was working in the evening I heard my brother John outside singing with his sweet voice some of our folk-songs. . . . He was always merry, and scarcely a day did we sit down to our mid-day meal—four grown-up brothers and a sister, besides the old people, round the table—but a host of droll remarks or lively stories converted our meal into a perfect feast. Never since have I heard expressed such clear, healthy opinions about people, or such a deep insight into their doings and sayings, as on those occasions.'

It is this brother John, his favourite playmate,

that inspires one of the most beautiful of his poems :

- * 'I would they'd come again, John,
 Those days when we were young.
 By neighbour's well, ah, then ! John,
 We sat whole evenings long.
 The silent moon we watched o'erhead
 From out the white clouds peep,
 And talked of how the heavens were high,
 And how the well was deep.
- 'Just think how still that was, John,—
 The world all hushed to rest—
 'Tis thus no more, alas ! John,
 Or just in dreams at best.
 And when some distant shepherd's song
 Trilled o'er the moorland lone,
 Oh ! John, 'twas music that indeed,
 Was sweeter ever known ?

* Ik wull wi weern noch kleen, Jehann,
 Do weer de Welt so grot !
 Wi seten op den Steen, Jehann
 Weest noch ? bi Nawers Sot
 An Heben seil de stille Maan,
 Wi segen, wa he leep,
 Un snacken, wa de Himmel hoch
 Un wa de Sot wul deep.

Weest noch, wa still dat weer, Jehann ?
 Dar röhr keen Blatt an Bom.
 So is dat nu ni mehr, Jehann,
 As höchstens noch in Drom.
 Och ne, wenn do de Scheper sung
 Alleen int wide Feld :
 Ni wahr, Jehann ? dat weer en Ton !
 De eenzige op de Welt.

' Sometimes at eventide, John,
 I feel my heart still swell,
 As when once side by side, John,
 We sat by neighbour's well.

Then eagerly I turn me round,
 As though you still were by ;
 Ah ! John, the only thing I find
 Is—that I stand and cry !

Such a life, unbroken by any event of greater importance than a trip in Germany, Klaus Groth continued to live till his twenty-eighth year. But if his life was uneventful, it was far from idle. He was one of those who 'scorn delights, and live laborious days.' The early morning always found him at his studies, and he had recourse to an ingenious expedient for ensuring his being wakened betimes. Every night when he went to bed he fastened a string round his wrist, and hung the other end of it out at the window. The purpose of Klaus's string was quite understood by all the villagers, and the first who happened to be astir never forgot to tug it, and to keep on tugging it till the schoolmaster himself appeared at the window to thank him for his kind service, and testify to its

Mitünnner inne Schummerntid
 Denn ward mi so to Mod,
 Denn löppt mi't lang den Rügg so hitt
 As domals bi den Sot
 Denn dreih ik mi so hasti um,
 As weer ik nich alleen :
 Doch Allens, wat ik sinn, Jehann,
 Dat is—ik sta un ween.

success. Poetry had a special charm for him, and, as he was gifted with a strong natural talent for languages, it was not long before he was quite familiar with the beauties of German, English, and Swedish literature. Nor did his special predilection for poetry prevent him from devoting some of his time to the sciences, especially to botany, of which he acquired an extensive knowledge.

The strain of these studious habits, coupled with the hard work of teaching, soon began to tell on his health. A complete change of life became imperative, and he resolved to abandon his scholastic career, and devote himself entirely to poetry. With this purpose he withdrew himself to the little island of Femarn. There, almost within hearing of the cannons which were to decide once more the destiny of his native land, his book of poems was written, and published, in 1852, under the title of 'Quickborn,' which means 'Living Fountain.'

Beyond this point it is needless to trace the poet's life. When he left Heide he had already laid up all the store of happy observations from which the materials of his poems are drawn. It is of the days he spent there that he sings in his sweetest strains, of the songs his mother lulled him to sleep with, of the weird tales his grandfather used to tell. The characters he met there live and breathe in his Idyls, while the tidy little farms of

the 'Marsch,' or the bare heaths of the 'Geest,' form an harmonious background to the whole. His heart was overflowing, and he felt he had but to look in it and write.

But there was something more in Klaus Groth's mission. Not only was he to write the songs of his native land, but to write them in his native dialect—the Low-German of the Ditmarsch. 'We write,' he tells us, 'to redeem the honour of the Low-German tongue.'

The language in which an author writes bears the same intimate relation to his writings as the material of which a building is constructed does to its architectural design. A marble palace would look ridiculous if reproduced in brick; nor can the ornamentation which is easy in freestone be carried out in granite. It will, therefore, not be amiss to give some account of this Low-German dialect which supplies the raw material of Klaus Groth's poems.

We must not imagine that Low-German implies anything low or vulgar. It owes its name to the fact of its being the language spoken by the inhabitants of the low-lying, flat countries of Northern Europe, in distinction to High-German, the language spoken in the inland and more mountainous districts. Low-German is not a corruption of High-German. The two languages stand to each other in the relation of sisters, not of mother and daughter.



Both have descended from a common source, and both of them comprise a group of dialects of their own. Among the dialects of the Low-German are Dutch, Flemish, and this Ditzmarsch dialect which we are considering; and so great is the resemblance between the last two members of this group, that on the appearance of 'Quickborn,' the Flemish hailed it with delight as written in their 'dear mother tongue' (*deerbare Modersprak*). The High-German also comprised a group of dialects ; but one member of that group has grown so great and powerful that it has either absorbed or overshadowed its weaker sisters. This dialect is what is now familiar to us all as 'German.' Notwithstanding that High-German has grown bigger and stronger than her sister, there is every reason to believe that Low-German is the older of the two—less altered, that is, from the original language, the mother of both, the language of heroic times, and therefore emphatically the language of poetry. But there is still another circumstance which renders the Ditzmarsch dialect specially fitted for poetry, and that is its virginity. It is the natural, undistorted language of the people who speak it. It has never been tamed and harnessed into literature, never expurgated by an Academy of philosophers, or measured off and confined within the precincts of an authorized dictionary. There are no words exclusively confined to poetic use, no special

vocabulary of pathos or of strength. Each word has its full primitive force ; and Klaus Groth had to learn it as Luther learned German, not from books, but ‘from the mother in the house, the children in the lanes, the men at the market ; from talking to them and watching their mouths’ (*denselben auf das Maul sehen*).

Klaus Groth’s love for the Low-German language was quite as great as for the people that spoke it. Like Frederi Mistral, it was the ambition of his life to prove that his native dialect was still a ‘living fountain,’ a source from which the poet might draw. Long after ‘Quickborn’ had achieved its success he wrote of it : ‘I am wont to regard this book, not as something I have given, but something I have received. The only merit I lay claim to is having recognised the capabilities of our language ; and I would refer everyone not to the book, but to the “living fountain” from which it has been created.’ The latent capabilities of the Ditmarsch dialect must be admitted—‘Quickborn’ itself bears evidence to them. But that Low-German can ever hold her own against her High-German sister, as his ‘Letters on Low- and High-German’ attempt to show, we can only regard as a poet’s dream. There is something pathetic in the passion and the ingenuity which he spends in hopeless advocacy of the claims of his native dialect. The spirit of progress will not listen to

the appeals or even to the arguments of a poet. She obeys no law but the survival of the fittest ; and all that is unfit, however beautiful, melts away before her breath. The railway and the telegraph are rapidly doing their work. The Gaelic in Scotland, the Welsh in Wales, the Breton in France, are fast dying out. The superstitions, the characters, the very costumes that accompanied them are all but vanished. And what is happening there will happen in the Ditmarsch too. The German Empire has already devoured her independence : ere long her language will follow it.

But while Klaus Groth, like Mistral, and many another poet who has preferred a simple dialect to a stately language, has been seduced into deifying what is but clay—and perhaps misshapen clay at best—unlike Mistral he indulges his infatuation in theory only, never in practice. He gravely assures us his bricks and thatch are marble and oak, but he never essays to build with them a Greek temple or a Gothic cathedral. He has given us no ‘Calendau’ or ‘Nerto.’ Every line he has written is as simple and homely as the tongue in which it has been composed. This Ditmarsch dialect is the natural element of his poems. In it they grow and flourish, as water-lilies do in water ; and the translator who separates them from it must be prepared to see them parch and wither in his hands.

When our poet first turned his attention to his native tongue, he found it clogged with the rust and dust of centuries. Not only must it be freed from these, but the workman must learn to handle his tools. Accordingly we find him setting himself diligently to practise the translation of German poetry into the Dithmarsch dialect. The German forms, however, were too familiar and too persistent to be shaken off in this way ; and it became necessary to seek for models in some less kindred tongue. Such he ultimately found in the poems of Robert Burns. By translating a number of these—notably ‘Tam o’ Shanter’—he soon acquired the needful facility in handling Low-German.

It was not unlikely that Klaus Groth should have his sympathy awakened by a certain similarity between Burns’s circumstances and his own. Burns, like himself, was a man sprung from the people, and one whose highest ambition was to be the poet of his people.

‘That I for poor old Scotland’s sake
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.’

Burns, too, had written in the dialect of his fellow-peasants, and had succeeded in painting peasant-life with a poetry and pathos never before attained. And yet the two poets have little in common. They differ as widely as the two countries they dwelt in ; as the ‘land of the mountain and

the flood' differs from the low, flat Ditmarsch. The Scotchman's wit, as well as his strength, is wanting in the Ditmarsch poet; but in pathos they are equally met; while the latter even surpasses in the portrayal of peasant life and the depiction of peasant character. 'Tam o' Shanter' and 'The Address to the De'il,' with their marvellous alloy of sublimity, humour, and pathos, are far beyond the powers of Klaus Groth. We might say they are beyond the powers of anyone except Burns himself. But the 'Cotter's Saturday Night' is quite within his reach.

The widest point of separation between the two poets is the difference in what Matthew Arnold would call their 'criticism of life.' Burns, throughout his whole career, had been condemned to fight with poverty, and was, or thought he was, the victim of oppression and neglect. His ambitions had ever been frustrated, and he was driven to regard life through a medium of disappointment and discontent. Klaus Groth, on the other hand, had never known what grief and disappointment were. Contentment is the key-note to his poetry. It is thus he expresses his view of life by the mouth of one of his characters:

* 'Thou must not
Condemn as worthless what thou dost not know.'

* Nich vaer ungut,
Wat man ni Kennt, dat schull man ni verdammn.

For every station has a world its own,
 And each one's life is moulded to its form.
 Survey it from without, and all within
 Looks cold and lifeless to thine eye, although
 Within the life is throbbing as before.
 And each has got his share of grief and joy
 For empty through the world no heart may go.

* * * * *

The peasant too has got his little world—
 He that would see it must have eyes to see—
 And has it then grown sadder than of old ?
 Let him but take a closer, surer look ;
 And, if within himself be found a heart,
 Then he will see this world is still as true,
 As happy, and as homely, and as gay
 As all the fairest tales that e'er were told.'

The trait which specially strikes us in Klaus Groth is precisely what the ablest of Burns's critics deplores his not having possessed—"a true religious

En jede Stand hett doch sin egen Welt,
 Un jede Lebenstid er egen Form,
 Un trit man rut, un steit man buten vaer,
 So meent man, binn' is Allens still un dot ;
 Un doch is binn' dat Leben so as sunst,
 Un Allens hett sin Deel an Freid un Leid
 Un lerrig geit keen Hart daer disse Welt.

* * * * *

De Bur hett ok sin egen lüttje Welt,
 Un wer se sehn will, de mutt Ogen hebben
 Un is se nich so lud as fröhernin,
 So kik he um so deeper, niper to,
 Un hett he denn en Hart vaer se in Liv,
 So ward he sinn', de Welt is noch so vull,
 So selig un so heimlich un so bunt
 As uns de besten Schriften man vertellt.

principle of morals.' In everything, Klaus Groth is religious. The contemplation of nature 'disturbs him with the joy of elevated thoughts.' The quiet summer evening awakens thoughts of the peace of Heaven and invites him to prayer.

* 'The world around is sleeping,
Deep sunk in dreams it lies ;
No sound of mirth or weeping
Disturbs the silent skies.
* * * * *

All care and strife allaying,
Heaven sheds her peace abroad :
It is a time for praying,
Oh, hear me, gracious God !'

Yet he is not given to moralizing. His poems are highly moral, but they carry their moral in them : they have none attached.

It is in the form of some of his songs that Burns's influence is most felt in Klaus Groth's poetry. Some traces of it may be detected in a poem already cited ; but in *Min Anna* it is specially striking :

* De Welt is rein so sachen
As leeg se deep in Drom,
Man hort ni ween noch lachen
Se's lis'en as en Bom.
* * * * *

Das wul de Himmelsfreden
Ahn Larm un Strit un Spott,
Dat is en Tid tum Beden—
Hör mi, du frame Gott !

- * ' My Annie's like the rose so red,
 My own sweet flower is she ;
 As swallows' light, my Annie's tread,
 My Annie's cheek's with crimson shed,
 Like apple on the tree.
- ' The Squire has fields of apples full,
 And beds of roses blown ;
 And let the Squire his apples pull,
 And let the Squire his roses pull,
 My Annie's still my own !
- ' She is my own, she is my all,
 And more than all to me.
 And when at windy winter's call
 The roses fade, and apples fall,
 Nor fade nor fall will she.
- ' Ah, no ! she'll never faded grow,
 She's always bright and gay ;

* Min Anna is en Ros' so roth,
 Min Anna is min Blom,
 Min Anna is en Swölk to Fot,
 Min Anna is as melk un Blot,
 As Appel oppen Bom.

De Vullmach hett en Appelgarn,
 Un Rosen inne Strat ;
 De Vullmach kann sin Rosen wahrn,
 De Vullmach kann sin Appeln arn :
 Min Anna is min Staat !

Se is min Staat, se is min Freid,
 Un Allens alltomal ;
 Un wenn de Wind de Rosen weicht,
 Un wenn de Wind de Appeln seit :
 Se fallt mi nich hendal.

Se fallt ni af, se fallt ni hin,
 Se hett son frischen Moth ;

But while life through my heart shall flow,
My Annie still its flower shall blow,
Until my dying day.'

The greater part of 'Quickborn' is occupied by short lyric poems and songs. I shall single out a few by way of illustration, not as being the finest, but as being fairly representative.

The decay of nature in autumn has afforded a theme to so many poets, that their treatment of it might be used as a standard of comparison of their different manners as well as their different merits. Here is how Klaus Groth treats this subject :

* 'The summer now is waning fast ;
Her farewell greeting, see ;
Of all the flowers I've culled the last,
A posy, Love, for thee.

'And when the first ones bloom anew,
If bloom they ever will,
God only grant they find us two
By one another still !

So blöht min Hart, so blöht min Sinn,
Min Anna blüst de Blom derin
Bet an min seli Dod.

* Nu welkt se hin de grüne Welt
Hier ist er letzte Grüssz :
De letzten smucken Blöm op't Feld
Ik bunn se to en Strusz.

Wenn nu de eersten wedder blöht
—Wat meenst du, ward se kam' ?—
Gev Gott, dat wi se wedder seht,
Wi beiden so tosam !

'Then, though the season fails to bring
 The flowers it brought before,
 Sweet Hope will paint all gay, and Spring
 Will bloom for us once more.'

Very characteristic, too, is the little poem 'Parting' (*As ik wegging*). It is invested with a peculiar interest, as having been the favourite of Heine, and translated into French prose by his friend Reinhardt, under Heine's own supervision :

* ' You saw me safely up the hill
 (The day was almost spent)
 And there you told me you must go :
 We parted, and you went.

' But I stood still and watched the woods
 Glow with the setting sun,
 And gazed upon the little path
 That you went winding down.

Ward't denn ok noch so grau op't Feld
 Un ward dat noch so kahl :
 De Hofnung hollt se smuck, de Welt,
 Se blöht uns bald noch mal !

* Du brochst mi bet den Barg tohöch
 De Sünn de sack hendal :
 Do säst du sachen, dat war Tid,
 Un wunst di mit enmal.

Do stunn ik dar un seeg opt Holt,
 Grön inne Abendsünn,
 Deen seeg ik langs den smallen Weg,
 Dar giengst du ruhi hin.

'And there the spire amongst the trees
 Bright in the sunlight gleamed,
 But I turned down the other side,
 And oh, how dark it seemed !

'In dreams how many times since then
 I've parted from you so !
 My heart dwells on the hill-top yet,
 And gazes down below.'

Similar in strain, but still more homely, is the following :

* 'I'm tired and I'm weary,
 And sit all alone ;
 I know not what ails me—
 I'm thinking of John.

'I'm tired and I'm weary,
 And dark is the night ;
 But I see him before me
 Stand smiling and bright.

Do weerst du weg, doch weer de Thorn
 Noch smuck un blank to sehn ;
 Ik gung de anner Sid hendal :
 Dar weer ik ganz alleen.

Nös heff ik öfter Assched nam'—
 Got weet wa mennimal !
 Min hart dat is dar baben bleben
 Sühlt vun den Barg hendal.

* Wa möd un wa slapri,
 Ik fol noch de Hann',
 Ik weet ni—wat be ik ?
 Ik denk an Jehann !

Wa möd un wa slapri,
 Un düster de Nacht :
 Ik seeg em mit Ogen
 As stunn he un lach.

'So kind and so gentle ;
And when my eyes shut,
With my heart I can see him
Stand smiling there yet.'

'And though he is distant,
In dreams we still meet.
Say not it is sinful ;
Sin ne'er was so sweet.'

In 'Grandmother' (*Grotmoder*) we have a picture which, for homeliness, pathos, and love of rich colour, reminds us of one of Joseph Israel's paintings :

- * 'Old granny in her easy-chair
Sits o'er her Bible bent ;
I wonder what it is she reads
That keeps her so intent !
- 'She's peering through her spectacles :
Her eyes are almost blind ;
For though she's lusty still, she's left
Some fourscore years behind.

So blid un so fründli,
Och ! mak ik se to,
So siht em min Hart noch,
As lach he me to.
Ik dröm wul int Waken,
Ik weet ni, wosück :
Ik weet ni, shullt Sünn wen ?
Och ne ! das dat Glück.

- * Grotmoder nült inn Laehnstohl
Un holt de Huspostill
Ik weet ni, wat de Olsche
Nu jümmer lesen will !
Se kikt sik daer er Brillglas
De Ogn noch redi blind
Se is noch orri strewi
Doch lang ni mehr keen kind.

'How dazed and dull she looks to-day !
 What can the reason be ?
 The dog keeps tugging at her skirts,
 And yet she doesn't see.

'She doesn't mind the kitten, too—
 He's climbed into her lap ;
 Nor feels that the canary bird
 Has perched upon her cap.

'The evening sun comes shining in,
 And tints her cheeks with red ;
 O God, have mercy ! Can it be ?
 Old Granny . . . she is dead !

When he sings for children, Klaus Groth is at his best. To attempt a translation of the inimitable cradle-song 'Hush, my Johnny' (*Still, min Hanne*) is a hopeless task ; and I must content myself with one which is less characteristic, for it is rather about children than addressed to them :

Bunmorgens is se gänzli
 Verbistert un verbas't,
 Se süht ni, dat de Müppé
 Er anne Rocken tas't.

Se markt ni, dat de Kater
 Er inne Nachtmutz slöppt
 Un de Kanarjenvogel
 Er oppe Fingern löppt.

De Sünn schint doch só fründli
 Un macht er Backen roth :
 Du lewe Gott in Himmel—
 De olche . . . de is dot !

* 'She was like a dolly, so bonny and wee,
And oft at the gloaming she'd sit on my knee ;
I patted her cheek, and my hand she would hold,
And always the old nursery story I told :

' "There once was a princess, gold, gold were her locks,
And she dwelt in a cottage with poor country folks ;
Till by came a prince, and the fair one he spied,
And he was the king then, and she was his bride."

' The years have sped onwards, and now she's grown up ;
But still at the gloaming she sits in my lap,
And presses my hand while I kiss her soft cheek,
And still of the old nursery story we speak :

' "There once was a princess, gold, gold were her locks,
And she dwelt in a cottage with poor country folks ;
Till by came a prince, and the fair one he spied,
And *I* am the king now, and *thou* art my bride."

* Se weer as en Pöppen, so smuck un so kleen,
Se seet mi in Schummern to dröm' oppe Kneen,
Se fat mi de Hand un ik strak er Gesicht,
Vertell ik er jümmer de ole Geschicht :

' Dar weer en Prinzessin, de seet in en Bur,
Haar, Haar as en Gold, un seet jümmer un lur ;
Do keem mal en Prinz, un he hal er herut,
Un he war de König un se war de Brut.'

Un gau is se wussen, un nu is se grot !
Se sitt mi in Schummern noch still oppen Schot ;
Se hollt mi de Hand un ik küss er Gesicht
Vertell ik er jummer de ole Geschicht :

' Dar weer en Prinzessin, de seet bi en Bur,
Haar, Haar as en Gold, un seet jümmer un lur ;
Do keem mal en Prinz, un he hal er herut,
Un *ik* bün de König un *du* büst de Brut !'

One more example before taking leave of this part of ‘Quickborn.’ It is one of his *dünjens*, or little songs (*cantilenæ*):

- * ‘No ditch is so deep, nor so high any wall,
If two love each other, they’ll meet spite of all.
- ‘No storm is so blinding, no night is so black,
If two lovers triste, they will still find the track.
- ‘If the moon doesn’t shine, there’s a star in the sky,
Or a lantern at least, or a torch handy by.
- ‘O’er the ditch there’s a bridge, there’s a gap in the wall,
If two love each other, they’ll meet spite of all.’

To some of my readers this glimpse of Klaus Groth’s Low-German lyrics may recall the Low-English poems—as they might well be described—of the late Mr. Barnes in the Dorset dialect; and a closer study of both poets will confirm this impression. Mr. Barnes has bestowed much study on the philology and history of the dialect in which he writes, and his researches greatly increase our interest in Klaus Groth’s country, for they point to the conclusion that it was from this very part of Europe that the ancestors of our West-of-England

* Keen Graff is so breet un Keen Müer so hoch,
Wenn Twe sik man gut sund, so drapt se sik doch.
Keen Wedder so gruli, so düster Keen Nacht,
Wenn Twe sik man sehn wüllt so seht se sik sacht.
Dat gift wull en Maanschin, dar schint wul en Steern,
Dat gift noch en Licht oder Lücht un Latern.
Dar sinnt sik en Ledder en Stegelsch un Steg :
Wenn Twe sik mal leef hebbt—Keen Sorg vaer den Weg.

countrymen originally came. ‘The rustic dialect of Dorsetshire,’ Mr. Barnes believes, ‘has come down by independent descent from the Saxon dialect which our forefathers, the followers of the Saxon leaders Cerdic and Cynric, Parta, Stuf, and Wihtgar, brought from the South of Denmark, their island seat—which King Alfred calls “Eald Saxon,” or Old Saxony—in what is now Holstein, and from the three islands, Nordstrand, Busen, and Heligoland.’ There exists, therefore, a nearer kindred than the mere ‘touch of nature’ between the Dorset peasantry and the peasantry of the Ditmarsch; and we may well be prepared to find a likeness between the poems which interpret the life and sentiments of each. Such a likeness bears the surest testimony to the truth of both their poets. We find the harvest-homes and Christmas festivals as merry amongst the descendants of Cerdic and Cynric in Dorsetshire, as amongst the descendants of those they left behind them centuries ago, in their distant home across the seas. They laugh over the same pleasures; they weep over the same griefs. Even in their rustic superstitions they are the same. That dreaded ‘weepen lädy,’ whose ghost may be seen in the vale of Blackmore,

‘When läate o’ nights, above the green
By thik wold house, the moon do sheen,’

reminds us of the kindred ghost who haunts ‘*dat gruli hus*’ away in the Ditmarsch. In his memories

of childhood Mr. Barnes is particularly happy, and it is there, too, that he most closely resembles Klaus Groth :

‘How mother when we used to stun
Her head wi’ all our naisy fun,
Did wish us all a-gone vrom hwome :
An’ now that zome be dead, an’ zome
A-gone, an’ all the pleäce is dum’,
 How she do wish, wi’ useless tears,
 To have ageän about her ears
 The voices that be gone.’

Verses like these—and Mr. Barnes’ rural poems are full of them—owe their charm to the same secret as Klaus Groth’s: they come directly from the heart, and they go as directly to it.

Whatever may be the merit of the lyrics and songs, it is in his longer poems—the ‘Family Scenes’ and Idyls—that Klaus Groth gets full scope for displaying his skill in the depiction of scenery and character; and it is this skill which constitutes his special excellence.

The ‘Family Scenes’ consist of a series of detached episodes in the every-day life of a peasant family. The characters that enact them are unmistakably himself and the members of his own household, disguised by nothing but their names. I may, perhaps, be able to give my readers a general idea of the character of those ‘Family Scenes’ by giving an outline of the finest of the series, the one entitled ‘Sunday Morning.’ Such a description

cannot, of course, convey any of the beauty of the original. It is impossible to describe the perfume of a violet. But it will allow an intelligent reader to form some conception of the plan of the poem, and of the *kind* of beauty which abounds in it.

The scene opens with the mother dusting at the cottage-door early on the Sunday morning, while a neighbour's wife stands by talking to her. Her little son is, naturally enough, the subject of conversation, and the mother softly pushes the door ajar so that her neighbour gets a peep into the clean, comfortable room. There, seated by the fire with a book open on his knee, is the old grandfather; while his little grandson leans over the side of his arm-chair looking on to the book and trying his best to follow. In depicting this group the poet uses his wonderful descriptive powers with great skill. It is a marvel of 'word-painting' in the most literal sense. Presently voices and footsteps are heard: it is Christian himself, the good man of the house, returning from his morning stroll round the farm. He has met with his brother-in-law, 'Uncle Hans,' and brought him back with him. The old grandfather welcomes both; the book is laid aside, and the simmering coffee is taken off the fire and poured into the blue cups that have been standing on the table all ready. Sitting over their coffee, they begin to talk about America, and both father and uncle vie with each

other in relating the glowing tales they have heard of this wonderful country, where rich crops grow up without tilling the ground, and cattle run wild, so that one can have them for the catching. Then they contrast with all this the oppression, the competition, and the hard times at home, until Christian exclaims, that if his old father will only consent to the change, he is ready to emigrate to this new land. The grandfather, who has up to this point remained a silent listener, now joins in with an indignant protest. No, they may go if they choose; but he will never come. One cannot change one's home as one would one's coat. He could not live without a Fatherland, and those who went there had none.

* 'Our sires of old have bled in Freedom's cause ;
This land is still all teeming with their blood.
There flows a drop of it in every vein,
Be it howe'er so humble, or so high.
This is true Freedom, this that dwells within,
That's born and bred in us from sire to son.
This makes the meanest of us frank and proud,
And makes the best so good, and brave, and true.

* Hier hebbt uns Olen vaer de Friheit blött
Un darvun is de Marsch noch jünner vull,
In jede Ader löppt en Dripp dervan,
So niedrig un so hoch, se hebbt em all.
Dat is de Freiheit, da der in uns stickt
As Slach un Art vun Vader un von Moder.
De makt de Schlechsten gros un aewerdadi.
Un unse Besten grad un slich un rech.

All else is idle talk. When Slavery comes,
She comes not from above, but from below.
Powerless are tyrants, if their slaves be brave.'

No, they might go, but he would not. An old tree-stump will not transplant. All his dearest memories circle round the little cottage they are sitting in. He tells them how he bought it years ago ; and how he brought his wife to see it just after they were betrothed ; and how they both lived in it so happily till she died.

* "Twas here I watched her lying cold and still—
Followed her coffin down that very path.
I've carried seven children to their graves.
It seems as though I saw their coffins now,
All borne together in one long sad train,
Some little and some big. Christian alone is left.
He's just as old as yon big ash-tree. Yes,
I planted it the day that he was born.
The smaller one is younger ; so's the poplar.
The oak is for my eldest : he died soon.

Dat annen is man Allens Snackerie,
Vun baben Kumt de Knechsaf nich henda
Wenn wi man wüllt, de Fürsten künnt ni vel.

* As se to Rau ging, stun se hier as Lik,
Un langs den Fotstig ging ik achterna.
Un saeben Kinner heff ik dat hentlankbrocht.
Ik seeg de Drägers noch un jede Sark,
As gingen se all toglik—en lange Reeg—
Vun grot un lütt—min Krüschan is man nablebn.
—De's jüs so old as disse Esch vaert Finster—
De grote hier—den plant ik as he keem ;
De lütt is jünger—ok de Sülwerpappel ;
De Eek is vaer min Ollst—de wull ni wassen—

The chestnut-tree I found here when I came,
 But brought the oak with me from Norderwald.
 How they've all grown ! They seem for ever young ;
 But man must come and go like grass and flowers.'

Touched by the old man's words, his little grandson steals to his side and clasps his arm. Christian rises, lays his one hand on his little son's head, and clasps his father's hand with the other.

* ' And there they stood like a three-bladed clover—
 The very same in figure, form, and face ;
 And yet as different as the Spring from Autumn—
 The still white winter separating both.'

Just then the church bells ring out through the quiet morning air, and the old man rises up and leads the way to church, to pray that they may never have to leave their dear old home.

In depicting those humble scenes, Klaus Groth reminds us of the Dutch painters. He has all their realism and all their love of colour and expression. But, unlike those painters, he never revels in what is vulgar merely because it is vulgar. There is not a touch of cynicism in any line he

Man blot de ol Kastanje weer hier al,—
 Den Eschen hal ik sülm ut Norderwold.
 Wa wasst se all !—as weern se ewi junk—
 Wi minschen kamt un gat as Blüm un Gras.

* So stunn' se dar, as weert en Klewerdre,
 De sülwe Art un Snitt, de sülwe Slach,
 Un doch so unlük as vun Harst tum Fröhjahr,
 De stille witte Winter twischen Beide.

ever wrote. And yet he is as alive to the humorous side of low-life as Brouwer or Jan Steen himself. One of his poems tells the story of the adventures of three cobblers, who set out on a fishing expedition, and catch nothing but a frog, a drowned cat, and a good drenching, but are so frightened to come home to their wives with nothing better to show for their day's outing, that they invest in a basket of fish on their way back. This piece is broadly humorous. He laughs unsparingly at the unlucky cobblers, but it is a good-natured, hearty laugh, and not the cynical sneer of Jan Steen.

Passing now to the Idylls which are no doubt Klaus Groth's finest work, 'From the Marsh' (*Ut de Marsch*) was considered by the poet himself the best of those included in the first series of 'Quick-born.' The story is told in three cantos, and is extremely simple. The heroine is the daughter of the *Vullmach*. There is a Vullmach in many of Klaus Groth's stories : he is the chief magistrate of the village, and is looked on by the villagers as being almost as great a man as the king himself. The Vullmach's daughter and young Reimer, the schoolmaster's son, fall in love. Reimer is secretary to the Vullmach, who, like Balzac's 'Père Grandet,' is a village Rothschild. He has speculations all over the country-side, and everything that he touches prospers. Reimer is kept working day and night, looking after his employer's affairs, and works

cheerfully for his sweetheart's sake. But her father is ambitious, and, though he adores his daughter, he will not hear of her wedding one so far beneath her as Reimer, the schoolmaster's son. The poor girl dies of grief, and leaves them both broken-hearted. In the last canto of this poem there is a beautiful touch very characteristic of the poet. As the funeral procession is passing down the street,

* 'A curly-headed boy,
Building a little dyke with mud he'd fetched
On an old shoe sole, stops his play to gaze
Upon the carriages with wondering eyes.
Thinks he some day he may be Vullmach too ?
Ah ! 'Tis not worth, my child, go on and play ;
Build up thy little world, and let the rest
Go by—Vullmach and joy lie wide apart.'

In the second series of 'Quickborn' there is only one poem of any length, and it has been pronounced by the German poet Giebel not only the finest of Klaus Groth's Idylls, but the finest Idyllic poem he has ever read. It is called *Heisterkrog*, or 'Magpie's Nest.' This was the name of a farm in the Ditmarsch, belonging to a Dutchman whom the villagers knew as 'Jehann van Haarlem.' We

* En lütten Kruskopp mit de Mütz in Nack,
He bu't en Dik un fahrt sik Eer inn Schuflad.
Nu hollt he still un kikt mit grote Ogen ;
Ob he wul denkt, he will mal Vullmacht warrn ?
Dat is't ni weert, min Jung, ga hin un spel.
Bu du din Welt, un lat de anner trecken,
De Vullmacht un dat Glück sünd zweerlei !

are told the whole story of how the ground was reclaimed from the sea, and how shrewd old Ripp, Jehann's father, came from Holland and bought it, outbidding all the villagers, the Mummsens, Brodersens, and Harrings, who never forgave him, or his son after him ; how Jehann spent his boyhood upon the farm, till he grew up, and his father one day fetched him a bride from Holland ; then, how the old man died. This occupies the first four cantos of the poem. It is not till the fifth that the real story begins. Jehann and his wife live a dull and lonely life, for they are still regarded as strangers by their neighbours ; but what is worse, they are little more than strangers to each other, for real love has never grown between them. There is only one family in the village with whom they have any intercourse—the Wevers, a widowed father with young daughters, who, like themselves, are strangers to the locality. Owing to the father having found employment elsewhere, the Wever family are about to leave the neighbourhood ; and in order to rescue Mika, the eldest daughter, from a forced marriage, Frau van Haarlem persuades her husband to take the girl to live with them at the Heisterkrog as a companion to herself. Mika's presence is like sunshine in the dull old farmhouse, and its poor young Dutch mistress is happy for the first time in her wedded life. But slowly and silently there has been growing between Jehann



and Mika a feeling that neither dare confess even to their own inmost hearts.

* ‘Sometimes when lying half awake, half dreaming,
A voice we hear that murmurs soft and low.
But if it joy be scarce we know, or sorrow ;
We hear it as we hear the toll of bells
That sometimes herald danger, sometimes feasting :
Now to the wedding bid us, now the grave.
Ought we to wake ? Alas ! we dare not waken—
So sweet in dreaming ears yon ringing sounds.’

But the waking comes, and it is tragic enough. Jehann, in a moment of passion, declares his love to Mika ; while, unknown to both of them, Frau van Haarlem is a witness of the scene. In a paroxysm of grief the poor dishonoured wife drowns herself ; nor does Mika long survive her friend. It is a sad story—so hopelessly sad that at times we can scarcely recognise our author :

† ‘What more is joy than moonlight on the sea,
What sorrow more than joy beneath the shadow ?’

But what makes ‘Heisterkrog’ a masterpiece is the beautiful studies of still-life in which it abounds.

* Man kann wat hörn, as twischen Drom un Waken,
Dat dringt Een daer bet an de deepste Stell,
Doch ob dat Freud, ob Schrecken, weet man nich,
Man hört, as horsh man op en Klockenklang :
Dat kann Gefahr bedüden oder'n Fest,
Dat kann to Gräfnis un to Hochtid lüden.
Ja, wenn man wak !—doch schu't man sik to waken—
Wat' ok bedüdt : de Klang is wunderbar !

† Wat weer denn Glück as Maanschin op de See,
Un Unglück anners as dat Glück in Schatten ?

The description of the 'Michelimarkt,' the autumn fair at Bredstad, is one in which the poet naturally revels, and he has made of it a Teniers in verse. In no other poem, too, have we better instances of the keen observation of nature which Klaus Groth had cultivated in these morning rambles of his schoolmaster days at Heide. It is thus he illustrates the change that was wrought in Jehann by his love for Mika :

* 'When wand'ring in the early morning sun,
 One sometimes sees upon the dewy grass
 His shadow cast in front ; and lo ! there shines,
 As in some saintly picture, on his head—
 His shadow's head—a crown of sparkling jewels.
 'Twas thus Jehann, when into her deep eyes
 He gazed, beheld an image like his own,
 But mirrored on bright dew in sparkling sun.'

It would be impossible to find a fresher or more beautiful image in nature to illustrate the strange refining power of love to which every lover, even old Sir Roger de Coverley in his plainer way, can testify. 'It is perhaps to this dear image in my heart owing, that I am apt to relent, that I so

* Man süht wul mal sin Schatten innen Dau
 Wenn man inn eersten Sünnschin morgens wandert.
 Opt Gras hin geit he mit Een, un verwunnert
 Bemarkt man—as man't wul op Biller süht—
 As lüch en Kron Een um den egen Kopp,
 Un spel as Parlen um dat Schattenbild.
 So seeg Jehann sik in er depen Ogen
 Un wat he vaer er dan, as in en Spegel
 Vun frischen Morgendau, inn Heiligenschin.

easily forgive, and that many desirable things are grown into my temper, which I should not have arrived at by better motives than the thought of being one day hers.'

But if an Idyll be a simple story simply told, I should, for my own part, give the palm to 'Peter Kunrad.' Peter, a simple-minded peasant, falls in love with a little actress girl, who has come to the village with a company of travelling actors. To the great grief of his mother, and the scandal of the neighbourhood, he resolves to marry her. The girl turns out quite worthy of the good fellow's love; but nothing will overcome the prejudice of the neighbours, who refuse to have any intercourse with one they consider so low and scandalous a character as an actress. So much do their coldness and insults prey upon the poor girl, that her parents come and steal her away; and honest Peter Kunrad sinks under the weight of grief and shame. The character of Peter himself is drawn with only a few strokes, but it is drawn to the life. We know him as if we had seen him and spoken to him, as if we had laughed at him when he first saw the play, and, like Fielding's 'Mr. Partridge,' took the whole thing for a reality, and was with difficulty restrained from rescuing the heroine, to the consternation of both actors and audience; and this laughter 'forms the channel for a tear' when his misfortune overtakes him. 'Peter Kunrad'

is quite entitled to be placed alongside of Goethe's '*Hermann und Dorothea*' . Indeed, the homely dialect in which it is written supplies a charm which is wanting in Goethe's poem, and the value of which has been already discussed.

It is needless to give a further account of these Idylls. To epitomize the story of any of them in a few words would be easy ; but to do so gives no idea of their charm ; it rather leads us to wonder where their charm can be. There is a subtle sort of beauty which escapes analysis. We often find something beautiful lurking in a simple homely scene—a common brick wall, perhaps, and a clump of trees—and yet we are quite at a loss to account for what that something is.

When '*Quickborn*' was published, the merits of its author were speedily recognised in Germany and Denmark. The admiration in which Heine held his poems has already been referred to. Gervinus, who was the first to notice him, has described his works as 'an oasis in the desert of the present.' W. von Humboldt, after poring over '*Quickborn*' into the small hours of the morning, wrote its author in terms of high praise, and showed his friendship for him in the most substantial way. The University of Bonn hastened to confer on him the honorary degree of Doctor, and he was afterwards appointed to the Chair of Literature in the University of Kiel.

'Quickborn' has been translated into Italian by Professor Teza, of Siena, and parts of it into French by Reinhardt. In England little has been done except by Professor Max Müller, who has noticed it in an article on 'Holstein and the Holsteiners,' now forming a chapter in his 'Chips from a German Workshop.' The same able scholar, with the co-operation of Miss Kate Freiligrath and others, tried to produce a complete translation of 'Quickborn' in English; but the difficulty of adequately rendering the poems into our language was so great that the scheme had to be abandoned.

It is to the original, therefore, and not to any translation, that English readers must refer; and it is vastly better that it should be so. The strangeness of the dialect may at first present some difficulty; but with the help of Professor Müllenhoff's glossary, appended to the earlier editions of 'Quickborn,' or of the German translation accompanying the later ones, this difficulty may easily be overcome. To enjoy 'Quickborn,' a thorough knowledge of Low-German is not required. Like John Inglesant with his Plato, we soon attain 'that lazy facility which always gives a meaning, though often an incorrect one; not always a matter of regret to an imaginative reader, as adding a charm and, when his own thought is happy, a beauty.'



STARING VAN DEN WILDENBORCH.

WE boast of Literature that she is more democratic than her sister, Art. She never permits her masterpieces to be owned by one rich man, but scatters them broadcast in the garrets of the poorest and feeblest of her followers. For a few pence—mayhap for nothing—she sends Cicero or Cervantes, Dante or Shakespeare to unfold their several treasures before us while we sit in slippers at our fireside. But Phidias' temple stands on the Acropolis of distant Athens, and Michael Angelo's sybils and prophets descend not, save in the dimmed glory of a photograph, from their thrones on the roof of the Sistine Chapel. Art's Mohammeds must go to her mountains ; and the pilgrimage means leisure and money.

But, to give Art her due, these mountains once gained, she imposes no more tasks upon us ; while Literature, though she bring her treasures within our reach, too often tantalizes us with the old

curse of Babel. Let us once get access to the Venus of Milo, and no dictionary is needed to interpret her naked charms ; but Homer, when he comes to our fireside, wears a Gyges' ring, the spell of which can only be conjured away by long apprenticeship with a ponderous lexicon and dingy grammar.

It is hard to believe that Literature will ever allow her light to be wholly buried under the bushel of a dull language ; yet the case of Holland seems to fulfil the conditions of such a phenomenon. 'It has been the misfortune of the Dutch,' says Hallam, 'a great people, a people fertile of men of various ability and erudition, a people of scholars, of theologians and of philosophers, of mathematicians, of historians, of painters, and we may add, of poets, that these last have been the mere violets of the shade, and have peculiarly suffered by the narrow limits within which their language has been spoken or known.' And then, as if to afford a practical illustration of Holland's misfortune to the readers of the three volumes of his 'History of European Literature during the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries,' Hallam devotes barely two pages to the vernacular poetry of that country which he admits 'at the end of the sixteenth century, and for many years afterwards, was pre-eminently the literary country of Europe.' When Dutch poetry evokes no more

attention than this from a painstaking scholar like Hallam, what can be expected from that already overburdened individual—the ‘general reader’? Who would think of learning Dutch? We read in the pages of Mr. Motley’s ‘History’ the thrilling story of how the little Netherlands threw off the yoke of Spain. We visit the picture-galleries of Amsterdam, or the Hague, and lavish praises on the mellow colouring of Rembrandt, or the faithful, homely canvases of Teniers and Jan Steen. We even condescend to admire the ingenuity of Dutch dykes, and the cleanliness and industry of a people who have perseverance enough to live on in a land they have literally made for themselves; but the guttural they speak lies as far beneath our attention as their country beneath the level of the sea. And who can blame us, when Holland’s own philosophers, Grotius, Erasmus, Arminius, Spinoza, thought it too barbarous a tongue to write in—nay, were even ashamed to wear their own Dutch names?

Sometimes, perhaps, we may have strolled round the exterior of a cathedral, with the purpose of gathering a sense of its plan and proportion before entering its doors; and in doing this our eyes may have happened to fall on the outside of one of its painted windows. What a dingy, and even ugly, aspect it presents! Pieces of dull, misshapen glass, thrown together without symmetry,

are held in their places by a labyrinth of leaden veins, some rudely outlining here an arm, there a head—*disjecta membra*—scattered about with no beauty and no apparent plan. But let us enter the building, walk through the dimly-lighted aisle, and view from within what a moment before we looked at from without. The dull glass now glows with all the mellow sparkle of ancient jewelry. The leaden veins have vanished, and the shapeless panes and scattered limbs have dissolved into an harmonious picture of dreamy virgins and venerable saints. It is thus with the language of Holland. Unattractive as its exterior may be, bootless as its study may seem, it is the key to a literature as splendid as its art.

I doubt if ever there existed at any one time and in any one country as brilliant an assemblage of artists, philosophers, statesmen and poets as that which sprang into life during the first half of the seventeenth century within the narrow confines of the Netherlands. Though the last of these groups, the poets, have been least appreciated outside their own country, they have not only produced work of the highest genius, but the interest of humanity is most richly woven into the texture of their lives. In the centre of the group we have the figures of Roemer Visscher and his two daughters, Anna and Tesselschade. Round them in their house in Amsterdam gathered all the flower of Dutch literature and art. Roemer Visscher himself, like most

of his guests, was no nobleman, but a busy merchant-citizen. He was not without poetic talent of his own, though the title of the 'Dutch Martial,' which some of his admirers bestowed upon him, was more warranted by his love of jesting than his poetry. Certainly his finest production was his beautiful and accomplished daughters. In the Christian (or, rather, *un-Christian*) name of one of these, the more beautiful and talented of the two, we have a trace of Visscher's whimsical character. He had lost a ship on the Island of Texel the year that she was born, and to commemorate the event, and take an original vengeance on Fortune, he called her *Tesselschade* ('Texel-losses'), a strange enough name for a fair poetess. One of the most intimate friends of the Visscher family was Hooft, 'the father of Dutch poetry.' Like the painters of his time, he had travelled in Italy, and, like our own Chaucer, had returned inspired with the spirit of Italian poetry. He has also left us a history of his country, on which Mr. Motley bestows unmeasured praises. Another frequent visitor at the Visscher's house in Amsterdam, and a friend of Hooft's, was Huygens, the statesman, whose polished metres recall strongly some of our own Elizabethan poets. But greatest of all was Vondel. He survived, as well as surpassed, the other members of this illustrious group; and when bordering on seventy, crowned a long

and brilliant list of dramas with ‘Lucifer,’ that poem which bears so close a resemblance to ‘Paradise Lost,’ and from which it is believed that Milton drew some of his inspiration. Vondel, like most Dutch poets, was a merchant by trade, and, like most of the world’s great poets, ended his days in poverty. Misfortune overtook him late in life, and his eightieth year found the author of ‘Lucifer’ a clerk in an office toiling for his daily bread. Lastly, we may add to this group (though he stood apart both in social intercourse and in the quality of his poetry), the name of Father Cats, the most Dutch of Dutch poets, whose plain, homely, didactic style is nearer what we might expect in the poetry of a steady, cleanly and industrious people like the Dutch; and, in fact, his poems, dull as they may seem to foreign critics, are still fondly learned and repeated by the present generation of Dutchmen.

With these great poets of Holland, the translations of that industrious literary student, Sir John Bowring, have given his countrymen some acquaintance*; but the poets of subsequent and less brilliant times have seldom been brought before the notice of English readers. It is one of the latter that I have chosen for the subject of this paper. In Holland itself, according to the best Dutch critics, his name is known too little; in England it is not

* *Batavian Anthology*, London, 1824.

known at all ; yet, more than any of the successors of Hooft and Vondel, he has inherited the noble traditions that belonged to Dutch poetry in its brightest days ; while his shortcomings, as well as his merits, are those peculiarly characteristic of all the poets of Holland.

The glories of the seventeenth century had gone. Most of the barren eighteenth, with its French mannerisms and affectations, had also passed away, and a new epoch had begun to dawn in Holland. All Europe was budding under the influence of a literary spring. The *sturm und drang* period was at its height in Germany. Goethe was travelling in Italy. ‘Werther’ and ‘Gotz’ had already been given to the world, and much of ‘Faust’ and ‘Wilhelm Meister’ been written. ‘Die Raüber’ had brought Schiller his first fame. Goldsmith had been dead ten years, and Scott was still a boy, entertaining his schoolfellows with stories of old castles and Border heroes.

It was at this time that the estate of Wildenborch, in the Gelderland, one of the richest and most beautiful parts of Holland, was purchased from the Countess of Limburg Stirum by a certain Hugo Staring, a naval captain of considerable distinction. The new proprietor did not long enjoy his possession, for in two years he died, leaving a widow and one son, sixteen years old.

Antoni Christiaan Wynandt Staring (such was the

boy's name), was then being educated at the High School of Gouda. Much of his father's life had been spent in service abroad, and as Madame Staring often accompanied her husband, and left their son at home, Antoni had developed habits of self-reliance which, combined with a natural talent for poetry, resulted in unusual literary precocity. At the age of nineteen, when still a schoolboy, he gave to the world his first work, under the title of 'First Attempts in Poetry' (*Eerste proeven in Poëzy*). The book was not well received by the public. One of its critics characterized it as 'unripe fruit,' and it must be admitted that this description is not unduly severe. The preface to the 'First Attempts' is now its most interesting feature. There the author sets forth his reasons for publishing, describing himself as 'a young man of nineteen, living in a circle where both encouragement and reliable advice were wanting, and who published these first attempts only that he might see from the favourable or unfavourable reception which they met with, what he had yet to learn.' Future events showed that this was not mock modesty, for the failure of his first book of poems really acted as an incentive to further efforts.

From the High School at Gouda, Staring went to complete his studies at the German University of Göttingen. A curious record of his diligence there has come down to us in the form of a scheme of

his day's work, found among his papers after death.

4 to 5 a.m.	...	... Music.
5 „ 6 „	...	... Mathematics.
7 „ 8 „	...	... Botany.
8 „ 9 „	...	... Archæology.
9 „ 10 „	...	... Chemistry.
12 „ 1 p.m.	...	... Italian.
2 „ 3 „	...	... Drawing.
4 „ 5 „	...	... Economics.
5 „ 6 „	...	... Natural History.

Nor do these subjects exhaust his accomplishments, for before quitting the University, he had mastered Spanish, Italian, Danish and Scandinavian, as well as English and German.

From Göttingen Staring returned to settle down on his estate of Wildenborch. Not many miles from its gates was the ancient town of Zutphen, which had played so prominent a part in the struggle for Dutch independence, and where, during one of its numerous sieges—just 200 years before—our Sir Philip Sidney, ‘the jewel of Elizabeth's dominions,’ met his mortal wound.

Staring's intercourse with Zutphen was necessarily frequent. He had not long left the University when he fell in love with the Mayor's daughter, and before his twenty-fourth year was completed,

the bells of the old town were ringing a merry peal in honour of his wedding. One year more, and the same bells were tolling for the funeral of his youthful bride. This cruel blow was followed in rapid succession by two more—the death of his infant son, and of his mother, whom he had cherished with more than filial affection. By these calamities Staring's muse was completely stunned. Never, even in after-years, could he trust himself to allude to them. They close the first chapter in his life; and six years of silence and mourning intervene before the next commences.

Its opening event was his second marriage. Charlotte van der Meulen, though she lived at Amsterdam, was, like his first bride, a native of Zutphen. She bore him eight children, four sons and four daughters, and the touching poem which he addressed to her on their silver wedding-day is a noble testimony of the tender affection they bore each other through all the long years of their married life.

It is proverbial that the homes of poets are rarely models of domestic bliss. But in Holland, with few exceptions, the poets' lives have run at least as smoothly as those of their less gifted neighbours. The main reason of this is that the smallness of the country, and the limited circulation possible for a book of poems, hardly admit of a Dutchman devoting himself entirely to the muses. We find,

even in the best days of Dutch literature, that her poets were plodding merchants or busy statesmen. Hence, a husband is not thrown on his wife's hands all day long, and one at least of the causes of domestic storm is avoided. Add to this that the peculiarly domestic vein which runs through the genius of the Dutch people, cropping up in all their literature and art, affects even the homes of their poets, and counteracts those Bohemian tendencies that the poetic calling is supposed to breed. The sarcasm of Byron—

‘ Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch’s wife,
He would have written sonnets all his life?’

is pointless in Holland ; and especially so in Staring’s case, where one of the finest, and certainly the warmest and tenderest of his poems is the ode to his wife on their silver wedding-day.

There could not be a happier family than that which gathered round the fireside at Wildenborch ; and the life and soul of it was the poet himself. He was not only the constant companion of his children in their amusements, but himself conducted all their studies. Yet this did not prevent him from finding time to manage his own estate and take a considerable part in the public affairs of the neighbourhood.

This life of a country gentleman was specially congenial to Staring. As well as an enthusiastic

agriculturist, keenly interested in every new invention and improvement, he was like his illustrious contemporary, Sir Walter Scott, a devoted anti-buarian. Indeed, he profoundly admired Sir Walter ; and each work of the wizard's as it saw the light, found its way over the dykes and ditches of the Netherlands, and was eagerly devoured in the old house of Wildenborch. What Sir Walter was doing for Scotland, Staring was struggling to do for his native Gelderland—to cast the halo of poetry and romance over all its scenes and legends. There was no lack of material either. The Netherlands, flat and uninteresting as they may look, glow at every point with the traditions of a long and romantic history. Of these Staring has made good use. Such a story as that of Ada imprisoned in the Island of Texel supplies him with the theme of a ballad of much pathos and grace :

* ‘ Mingled with the night wind’s moaning,
O’er the boundless ocean blow
Mournful strains. With harp intoning,
Hapless Ada sings her woe.’

Oftener the scene lies close to the poet’s home. The neighbouring villages, Lochem Arnhem, Zutphen, furnish each its story. Even the old house

* In’t gedruis des wind’s verloren ;
Over’t woelig ruim der zee,
Laat zich Ada’s harptoon hooren ;
Jammert dus haar hulploos wee.

of Wildenborch itself is successfully put under contribution.

Staring was so fully occupied with his estate and his domestic cares, that it was only in winter, when out-of-door work was at a standstill, that he found sufficient leisure for poetry. Then, those who knew him best would notice at times his flow of conversation stop, and his usual vivacity give way to pensive silence. This was an unmistakable indication that he was composing. He made it a principle never to divulge a verse till the poem was completed. But then, when the evening meal was over, and a ring of friends seated round his fireside, he would willingly recite the latest creation of his muse. One can, therefore, understand his frequent praise of winter :

* 'Welcome, winter ! Freeze and snow !
What though all looks dreary ?
Blazing logs the brighter grow
Round a hearth more cheery.
Howls through drifting clouds the wind ?
Roof and wall can bear it.
Roars without the threatening flood ?
A glass we'll fill, and dare it.'

* Welkom, Winter ! Kraakt uw ijs ?
Vult uw sneeuw de dalen ?
'k Heb hier dooiweér aan den haard,
En geen brand te halen.
Blaast gij storm, door't vliegend zwerk ?
Muar en dak kan't lijden.
Giet gij vocht in stroomen neér ?
't Valt mijn glas bezijden.

' Short the days? Then less the need
 With work our hands to cumber.
 Long the nights? Then weary folks
 Have longer time for slumber.
 The orchard's bare of luscious fruit,
 Now dry our fare and sober.
 What matters that? It only means
 More drink to wash it over.
 ' Come then, winter, do your worst,
 Storm and blow and bluster;
 Chase your snowflakes round and round,
 Bid your ice-drops cluster.
 Steal one half our light away,
 Make our fare more humble;
 Bring but drink and song, and pray!
 Let's see the wight would grumble?

Though so much of the poet's life was passed in the company of his wife and children, there was one room in the house of Wildenborch which was his

Krimpt de dag? te minder nood,
 Om bij licht te gappen.
 Rekt de nacht? het komt hem wel,
 Die gepaard mag slapen.
 Laat de hof geen sappig ooft
 Op mijn tafel blinken!
 Drooge spijs teert even goed,
 Bij wat ruimer drinken.
 Plas dan, winter, met uw nat;
 Storm en vries daar buiten;
 Jaag un ligte vlokken rond,
 Voor mijn digte ruiten;
 Geef ons half rantsoen van dag,
 En een schotel minder;
 Welgemoed, bij zang en wijn,
 Klaag ik van geen hinder.

own special sanctuary—the library. The biographer of a literary man should never fail to let us have a look into his hero's library. The very room may tell its tale. Montaigne's circular chamber, for instance, perched up in a tower, with its five rows of books and mottoed rafters—the 'single corner' which the great essayist 'tried to make purely his own,' and to 'free from conjugal, filial, and civil community'—seems a fitting mould for the essays that were cast in it. But even if the room refuse to speak, the books, at least, will bear faithful witness to their owner. No two men ever collect exactly the same books. Our libraries vary as much as the lines on our palms, and are a much more reliable index of character. Staring had a love for finely-bound books, and prided himself on the neatness and order of his library. How much he did so may be judged (especially by smokers) from the following incident related by his biographer: 'From his German student days he had learned to be a great smoker, and seldom was a pipe out of his mouth. The result was anything but perfume to his books and study, while tobacco-ash dirtied everything he read. One day this dawned upon him. "Away with German and Gouda pipes," he cried; "away with snuff-boxes and tobacco-pouches! Why should man make himself a two-legged peripatetic stove?" and he never touched a pipe again.'

The insides of his books bore every trace of

familiar—too familiar—intercourse. Pencil notes abounded on the margins and dog-ears on the pages. The latter especially marked out his favourites with unerring precision. He had a little edition of Horace, where almost every page was doubled and folded at the corners, so that the passages which had specially commended themselves to him might be easily referred to again. Sometimes, instead of dog-ears, scraps of paper were inserted as markers. In Huygen's 'Korenblomen,' one hundred and thirteen such paper-markers were found after his death. Hooft's 'History of the Netherlands,' Cats' poems, and La Fontaine's fables were also signalized in this way as special favourites.

The names of these five poets explain more effectively than any description the nature of Staring's own poetry. He is drawn in one direction by his antique models, in another by the influence of modern taste. The classical elegance of Horace and La Fontaine struggles with the homely familiarity of Dutch Father Cats. Here we listen to the notes of Huygens, which, again, are but echoes of our own Elizabethan poets, Donne, Carew, Herrick, and Suckling; ere a page is turned we are awakened to the present, and reminded that Goethe has completed the Revolution of Romanticism.

These opposite influences may be seen by con-

trasting such pieces as the classical 'Zephyr and Chloris' with the romantic treatment of the little poem entitled 'Remembrance' (*Herdenking*).

* 'Zephyr sunk in sleep had lain
While the noon-day beam was burning.
Nightingales at eve's returning
Waked him once again.

'Gently swayed the birch her crown,
Soft the stately poplars rustled,
While along their lines he jostled,
Dancing gaily down.

'Scatt'ring perfume far and wide
Through the forest now he's flying,
Chloris for her bridegroom sighing
Lures him to her side.

'See ! he leaves the shady bowers
Wrestling where yon briar opposes,
Till a wanton rain of roses
O'er his bride he showers.'

* Zefir lag ontsluimerd neér
Bij den gloed der middagstralen ;
't Avendlied der nachtegalen
Wekt den slaper weer.
Zacktkens wiegt de berk haar kruin ;
Fluistrend staan de popeldreven,
Als hij vrolijk aan komt zweven,
Langs het scheemrig duin.
O, hoe geurt het van rondom ;
Nu zijn vlugt in 't bosch blijft hangen !
Chloris lokt, vol zoet verlangen,
Haren Bruidegom.
Zie, daar zweeft hij 't loover uit !
Door de struiken afgazecken
Plengt hij dartlend bloesemregen
In den schoot der Bruid.

REMEMBRANCE.

- * 'A shelter 'neath the boughs we found us,
 The rainy leaves still dripped ;
 A swallow skimmed the lake around us,
 Her wings the waters tipped.
 And soft the balmy evening breeze
 Was whispering through the willow-trees.
- 'Twas stiller : soon the leaves stopped dripping,
 The swallow went to rest,
 And down the hill the mist came slipping,
 And day sunk in the west.
 Then sung sweet May her evensong.
 We speake no word, but listened on.
- 'I gazed on her with passion tender
 Till blended soul with soul.
 O magic eyes to eyes that render
 The loving looks they stole !
 O lisping sweet that breathes the bliss
 Of lips devouring Love's first kiss !

* Wij schuilden onder droppend loover
 Gedoken aan de plas ;
 De zwaluw glipte 't weivlak over,
 En speelde om't zilvern gras ;
 Een koeltje blies, met geur belaân,
 Het leven door de wilgenblaân.

't Werd stiller : 't groen liet af van droppen ;
 Geen vogel zwierf meer om,
 De daauw trok langs de heuveltoppen
 Waar achter 't westen glom ;
 Daar zong de Mei zijn avendlied !
 Wij noorden 't en wij spraken niet.

Ik zag haar aan, en, diep bewogen
 Smolt ziel met ziel in een.
 O tooverblik dier minlijke oogen,
 Wier flonkring op mij scheen !
 O zoet gelispel van dien mond
 Wiens adem de eerste kus verslond !

'The willow boughs in peace lay sleeping,
 The gloaming now was o'er.
Across the fields cold night was creeping,
 We dared not linger more.
 Live on for ever unforget,
 O hallowed hour ! O sacred spot !'

In many of his poems, both the classical and romantic influences are traceable. This may be seen in a subject affording perfect freedom of treatment, an Ode to the Moon.

- * 'Shine forth in splendour, O silvery moon,
 Rise o'er the deep :
Smile on the little boats graciously down,
 Beam on the path of the wanderer lone,
 Come thy vigil to keep.'
- 'Where in dark sorrow the destitute mourn,
 Shed forth thy light ;
Peep through the lattice where lover forlorn
 Pines for the love from whose side he is torn ;
 Break through the gloom of the night.'

Ons dekten vreedzaam wilgenloover ;
De scheemring was voorbij ;
Het duister toog de velden over ;
En dralend rezen wij
 Leef lang en blij herdenken voort,
Gewijde stond ! Geheiligd oord !

- * Toon ons uw luister, O zilveren Maan !
 Rijs uit het meer
Lach den zwervenden scheepling aan.
Straal, op's wandelaars donkere baan,
 In uw lieflijkheid neér.
Waar zonder hoop de Verlatene smacht,
 Schemere uw gloor.
Waar na troostelooze afscheidsklagt
Blij hereenen de Minnenden wacht,
 Breke uw glinstering door.

' Fair is the Day, when the Dawn's rosy feet
 Gleam on the hill.
 Gay are the carols her wakening that greet,
 Yet is thy coming more pensively sweet,
 Thou that shin'st and—art still.'

In a poem entitled the 'Elixir of Youth' (*De Verjongings-cuur*) he has given us a direct imitation of La Fontaine, and so happily is the manner of the French poet assumed that it might easily be mistaken for an unusually good translation. It is the tale of an old maid who bought of an Arabian doctor an elixir which she was to take before going to sleep, and in the morning she would awaken a beautiful girl of twenty. In her zeal she takes too big a dose, which produces a proportionately greater effect, for, instead of wakening a girl of twenty, she finds herself an infant in swaddling clothes. The minute faithfulness with which the peculiarities of La Fontaine's style are here reproduced, bears testimony to the closeness with which the model had been studied. La Fontaine may also be traced in some of the numerous epigrams (*Punkt-dichte*) he has left us, though the inspiration of Father Cats is more plainly discernible

Schoon is de Dag, als zijn purpere gloed
 Vorstelijk stijgt ;—
 Als hij zingend de ontwaakten groet !
 Maar uw komst is den peinzenden zoet,
 Gij die flonkert en zwijgt !



in this homely and not highly elevated style of composition. In a few of these epigrams, however, there does breathe the true spirit of poetry, as in the one addressed to the Dutch poet Van Alphen, the author of a song, then very popular, which is partly quoted, and made the occasion of a compliment to Chloe :

* ‘ O thou that sing’st “ How Heaven’s array
Soft mirrored on the ocean lay,”
Come see in gentle Chloe’s eye
These tears, from Pity’s fountain deep.
Then take thy lyre again, and try
To sing “ The angels never weep.” ’

In the scheme of Staring’s studies at Göttingen before referred to, the first hour in the morning was devoted to music. Through all his life he continued passionately fond of it. His poetry is highly adaptable to music, and, indeed, most of his poems were specially written to musical airs, many of which were also of his own composition. Such was the case with these beautiful verses on ‘ Trust’ (*Vertrouwen*).

* O gj, die zongt ‘ hoe’s Hemels Heir
Zich spiegelde in het effen meir ’
Zie Chloë’s minlijke oogen stralen
Door tranen, die heur hart vergiet
En grijp de lier, en durf herhalen :
‘ De starbewoners weenen niet ! ’

* 'Go, bleeding heart, and lay aside thy sorrow !
 For soon again the meeting day shall be.
 This night of parting with its tears shall flee,
 And from the dark shall dawn the morrow.

'Her faith stood fast ; shall I alone turn faithless ?
 Let Heaven's axis sooner weary grow !
 What boots the tricks of fate, the threats of foe ?
 Above them all Love rises scatheless.

'To steal but little unto Time is given :
 If Love be true, she scorns his sway so brief.
 Though life below she pass in lonely grief,
 She lifts her longing eyes to Heaven.'

Harsh as the Dutch language may be, it has often lent itself better to music than the softer tongues of the South. Beethoven himself composed one of his masterpieces to the words of a Dutch poem, 'Adelaide,' by Mattheson. Adaptability to music does not depend entirely on the

* Gefolterd hart, o staak uw angstig jagen !
 Eens komt het nur van 't juichend wederzien ;
 De scheidingsnacht zal met zijn kommer vlien
 Ons morgenrood in luister dagen !

Haar trouw staat vast ; en zou' de mijne falen ?
 Des hemels as wierd eer haar wentlen moë !
 Wat grint ons dan 't vijandig Noodlot toe ?
 In 't eind moet Liefde zegepralen !

't Is weinig slechts, wat ons de Tijd kan rooven !
 Oprechte Min versmaadt zijn kort gebied.
 Schoon 't leven hier ook in gemis vervliet',
 Zij slaat een moedig oog naar boven !

softness of the sounds which compose a poem, but largely on the meaning and style of the composition itself. The most rugged old ballads often lend themselves best to music. This is largely to be accounted for from the graphic individuality of their words, for, in a simple ballad, each word represents a complete idea in itself, round which the air may linger and play at its fancy. But Staring's poetry possesses another element of music, in the variety and richness of its metrical forms. Of one of these which he greatly favoured I give a specimen, though a fair translation is almost impossible :

* 'Ye Matrons,
Sedate ones !
Your efforts ye waste
Who'd teach blushing maidens
That prudish means chaste.

'Ye strain
All in vain
Love's wiles who would flout.
Where ripe is the bosom
He'll soon find it out.

* Gij moeders
Gij hoeders
Der bloeijende jeugd
Wat mort gij, wat noemt gij
De spijtigheid deugd !
Wat keert gij
En weert gij
De listige Min
Van rijpende boezems ?
He raakt er toch in !

‘Such ruses
 He uses,
 Keep watch as ye may,
 He’s bent on his mischief
 By night and by day.
 ‘He mocks
 At your locks
 Brass bars will not keep.
 He’ll soon scale your rampart,
 Your moat he will leap.
 ‘Two glances,
 Two fancies,
 He’s seized on his prey . . .
 And not all your lectures
 Can chase him away.’

In this tripping list two of his best poems, ‘The Harvest Song’ (*Oogstlied*), and ‘Ode to the West Wind’ (*Aan Favonius*), are written. It is on them, and others like them, that his poetical fame mainly rests. Yet they give but a slight indication of the

De kruiper
 De sluiper
 Houdt ijverig wacht ;
 Hij light op zijn luimen,
 Bij dage, bij nacht.
 Al sluiten
 Hem buiten,
 Met grendel en boom
 Benagelde poorten ;
 Al dreigt hem een stroom ;
 Twee achjes
 Twee lachjes
 Hij’s binnen, de Guit !
 En duizend sermoenen . . .
 Hij is er niet uit.

singularly wide scope of his poetry. Indeed, it may be doubted whether he is not more at home on far less classical ground. 'Take me,' he says, in a hymn to Simplicity—

- * 'Take me, sweet Simplicity,
In the shade to walk with thee :
Where the vine-leaves cluster green,
And the blossoms peep between.
- 'Teach thine every little thought
Unto me as child is taught ;
Each repeating from thy mouth,
Word by word the laws of truth.
- 'Train mine ear to love alone
Songs that be of nobler tone ;
And, in place of garish sight,
Mellowed age mine eye delight.
- 'Should I dare to touch the lyre,
Every note do thou inspire.
Come, then, gentle nymph, I pray,
Guide my life, adorn my lay.'

-
- * Breng mij, zachte Eenvoudigheid
Waar de stulp uw schreden beidt,
Die de wijnstok half omvatgt ;
Daar de bloeitak over hangt.
Leid mij tot uw klein gezin,
Als een trouwen jonger in ;
Doe mij, luisterned naar uw mond,
Waarheids echte leerling kond.
Dat mijn oor geen woest geschal
Boven eedlen zang gevall,
Noch mijn oog een bont vertoon,
Meer dan oudheids zedig schoon.
Waag ik eens de lier te slaan ;
Spoort mij pligt tot handlen aan ;
Schoone Nimf ! ontsta mij niet ;
Tooi mijn Leven en mijn Lied.



But Staring could touch the banjo as well as the lyre, and at times displays symptoms of the same *Zerrissenkeit* which annoys us in Heine and Byron. Thus he mars a graceful adaptation of Goldsmith's 'Edwin and Angelina,' by adding this buffoonery by way of a moral at the end :

- * 'Now maidens all, brunette or blonde,
The Hermit of our day,
I preach to you on bended knee,
So harken what I say.'
- 'Hold fast whene'er an Edwin comes,
And bind him if he'll bind,
Lest ye like Angelina seek,
But, seeking, fail to find.'

If he sometimes shows a want of seriousness in the wrong place, it cannot be said of him as Goethe said of Heine, that he had every gift, but wanted love. He is really a victim to his versatility—a gift as fatal as fluency. Broad humour comes to him as easily as (perhaps more easily than) the 'songs of nobler tone,' to which he vowed his devotion.

This versatility is a conspicuous characteristic of

-
- * En nu, gij Meisjes, blond en bruin ;
De sier van onzen tijd,
Ik predik met gebogen knie ;
Des hoort mij zonder spijt !
 - Houdt vast, wanneer een Rijnoud komt,
Houdt vast zoo duur een vriند,
Te menig, die met Ada zoekt
En niet met Ada vindt.

Dutch poetry. I have already pointed out that in a small country like Holland, where the circulation of books is limited as well by language as territory, it has been found next to impossible for any author to support himself by literature alone. The same causes make it difficult for an author to adhere strictly to any one department of literature. The functions of poet, historian, critic, and novelist are generally combined. So it was with Staring. Poetry was the solace of his leisure, not the business of his life; and it divided even his leisure with the study of archæology. This versatility is apparent within his poetry itself. One can hardly recognise the polished author of 'Zephyr and Chloris' in the broad humour of 'Jaromir.' This latter is the most important of his many humorous pieces, and is worth describing at some length. As in the 'Ingoldsby Legends,' to which it bears much resemblance, a considerable amount of skilfully digested archæological research is concealed beneath its humorous exterior; for Staring was, before everything, an archæologist. However rudely he may have violated his vows of devotion to the 'nobler forms of song,' to his love for 'mellowed age' he ever remained faithful.

Not far from Wildenborch, close to the village of Lochem, were three murky ponds, known as the *Duivelskolkens*, or Devil's pools. To account for their name, a curious legend had sprung up among

the peasantry ; and this legend, along with another equally uncanny local name, *Duivelsaars*, and the mark of a hoof on the stone floor of the library behind the church of Zutphen, supplied Staring's imagination with sufficient foundation for a very quaint mediæval tale in four parts.

The first of these shows us Jaromir, the hero, when he has just completed his theological studies at Prague and set out to seek his fortune. He has wandered far, his purse and his stomach are both empty, and night approaching, when the discovery of a cow's tail and two horse's feet by the wayside suggests to his mind an artifice for getting both a bed and a dinner. Putting them in his bag, he stops at the first inn he reaches, orders a sumptuous meal, retires for the night, and sleeps soundly. Next morning he summons the servant to his bedside to receive his commands, but arranges one of the horse's feet so that it protrudes from beneath the blankets. The menial flees in terror, to tell the tale to mine host, who comes to see for himself, and finds not one foot, but two ; while all further doubt as to the satanic character of the guest is dissipated by a third person, who goes up to satisfy his scepticism by a peep, and finds not only two horse's hoofs protruding from the blankets, but a slowly wagging tail. Convinced that Jaromir is no other than the Devil himself, the landlord is only too ready to speed his departure, and refuses

to tempt misfortune by accepting remuneration from such a source.

Years roll on ; and in the second canto we find Jaromir toned down into a devout Franciscan friar, who wanders from town to town, increasing in each his fame no less as a preacher than an exorcist. At length his wanderings bring him to Lochem. As he approaches the village, the church bells are ringing, and his experienced ear detects with horror that they are unconsecrated by baptism, and in righteous indignation he commits them to the Devil. Now, Satan was naturally not well-disposed to so formidable an exorcist as Jaromir, and none the more so that he owed him the old grudge of having once successfully impersonated his Satanic majesty. Here was the moment for revenge. Jaromir had cursed the bells, and immediately these went whirling into the air ; but he had not included the clappers, and the Devil, scorning to appropriate church property to which he was not fully entitled, jerks them out on to the worthy friar's head with a severity which would have been fatal had not the timely interference of the Archangel Michael mitigated the blow :

* 'The bells, meanwhile, were whirled away
Swift through the air. Two pools there lay

* De Klokken middlerwyl voltrekken
Haar aangevangen reis. Twee Waterpoelen strekken

(From Lochem's town not many paces),
 A mirror for the clouds' white faces,
 Where noisy ducks found wet delight.
 Straight over here they whirled and fell
 Plump down, in either pool a bell.
 Thenceforth the " Devil's pools " they're hight.
 And still at Christmastide each year
 Who ventures near these pools will hear
 The Devil toll his bells at night.'

The third canto shows us Jaromir in the library of Zutphen church, convalescent from the results of his recent mishap at Lochem. Out of gratitude to St. Michael, he has vowed to fast every second Tuesday for a year. It is on one of these days that he sits in the library deep in the 'Confessions of St. Augustine'—so deep that he is undisturbed by two intruders. The one is the custodian, who, oblivious of the fast-day, sets down on the floor as is his wont a basket containing the friar's supper—his favourite dish too, a nicely-roasted fowl. The other intruder was no other than the Evil One himself. Who else could have knocked the library keys from off the table? Jaromir, his attention still fixed on

(Een kuijer ver van Lochem's Veldgemeent')
 Ten badplaats aan de snaatrende eend
 Ten spiegel aan de bonte wolken :
 't Was derwaarts dat ons tweetal trok ;
 In elk der Kolken plompt een Klok—
 En't zijn voortaan de *Duivelskolken*.
 Zoo vaak het jaar weer Kerstijd bragt,
 Kwam, sedert, *puncto* middernacht,
 De Helvoogd op zijn Klokken trommen.

his book, reached down to pick them up, but picked up instead the roasted fowl. . . . He had devoured most of it before he became aware of the presence of his exulting tempter, in the form of a dog, which, ere he had time to formulate an exorcism, snatched up the keys in its mouth, and vanished, leaving Jaromir a prisoner in the library till next morning. This second victory of Satan weighed so heavily on the good friar's mind, that he undertook a pilgrimage to St. Michael's Grotto, in Italy, and remained there for months praying and fasting.

But the fourth canto brings him back once more to the scene of his former adventures, to take his final revenge. The Devil had been having everything his own way at Lochem in Jaromir's absence, and had crowned his achievements by taking complete possession of the chaplain. He had aroused in the heart of this young ecclesiastic an unlawful passion for a certain Beguin, fair to look on, Leonora by name, in such a manner as to scandalize all good Christians. For the chaplain, when he rose in church to chant the *Ave Maria*, could say nothing but *Ave Leonora*; while outside the precincts of the sacred edifice he wandered about singing from an opened missal the far from sacred song of 'Leonora's rosy lips.' Such was the humiliating sight which met Jaromir as he entered Lochem *incognito*. The chaplain, however, or, rather, the Devil within him, instinctively

recognised the presence of the great exorcist, and fled into a hedge. But the bann he had escaped in the church of Zutphen was no longer to be evaded :

* 'The mighty formula then, word for word,
The evil spirit, all a-tremble, heard.
Forth from the chaplain horn and hoof he leapt,
And soared in Hell's most hideous form on high.
When lo ! St. Michael smote him in the sky,
Down like a log he fell, and helpless crept
Along the ground, hanging his guilty head.'

Jaromir hastened to follow up his victory. Seizing the fiend by the tail, he belaboured him with his knotted friar's girdle till Pandemonium rang with his howls ; and having thus vanquished and humbled the Enemy of mankind, he entered Lochem, the great mission of his life fulfilled :

† 'As to the chaplain, he cast eyes no more
On any woman younger than three score.'

Had Staring written nothing but 'Zephyr and Chloris' and 'Jaromir,' he would have established a claim to versatility in a degree unusual even in a Dutchman. It may be said, however, that versa-

* Het magtig Formulier werd des van woord tot woord
Al tandeknersend door den Booswicht aangehoord ;
En uit den Kapellaan met huid en haar geweken
Steeg hij (afschuwlijk in zijn helgestalt ') naar't hoog ;
Toen daar de Schildwacht Sint Michiel hem tegenvloog !
Plots heeft de luchtreis uit ; zijn spierkracht is bezweken
Hij tuimelt neer, en boort nu, 't hoofd omlaag, in de aard.

† 'En nu de Kapellaan ?' Die keek sinds naar Keen Vrouw
Of 't moet een bes van tachtig wezen.

tility rarely coexists with true genius. The chameleon that assumes the colour of everything can have little brilliant colour of its own. To that rarest genius that creates a new world for itself, Staring can make no claim. He sought his thyme and marjoram among the older poets, but the honey he culled from them was his own. It was honey of the purest and sweetest, too. Never since the voices of Hooft and Vondel and Huygens had been silenced, were the echoes of Dutch poetry awakened by songs like his.

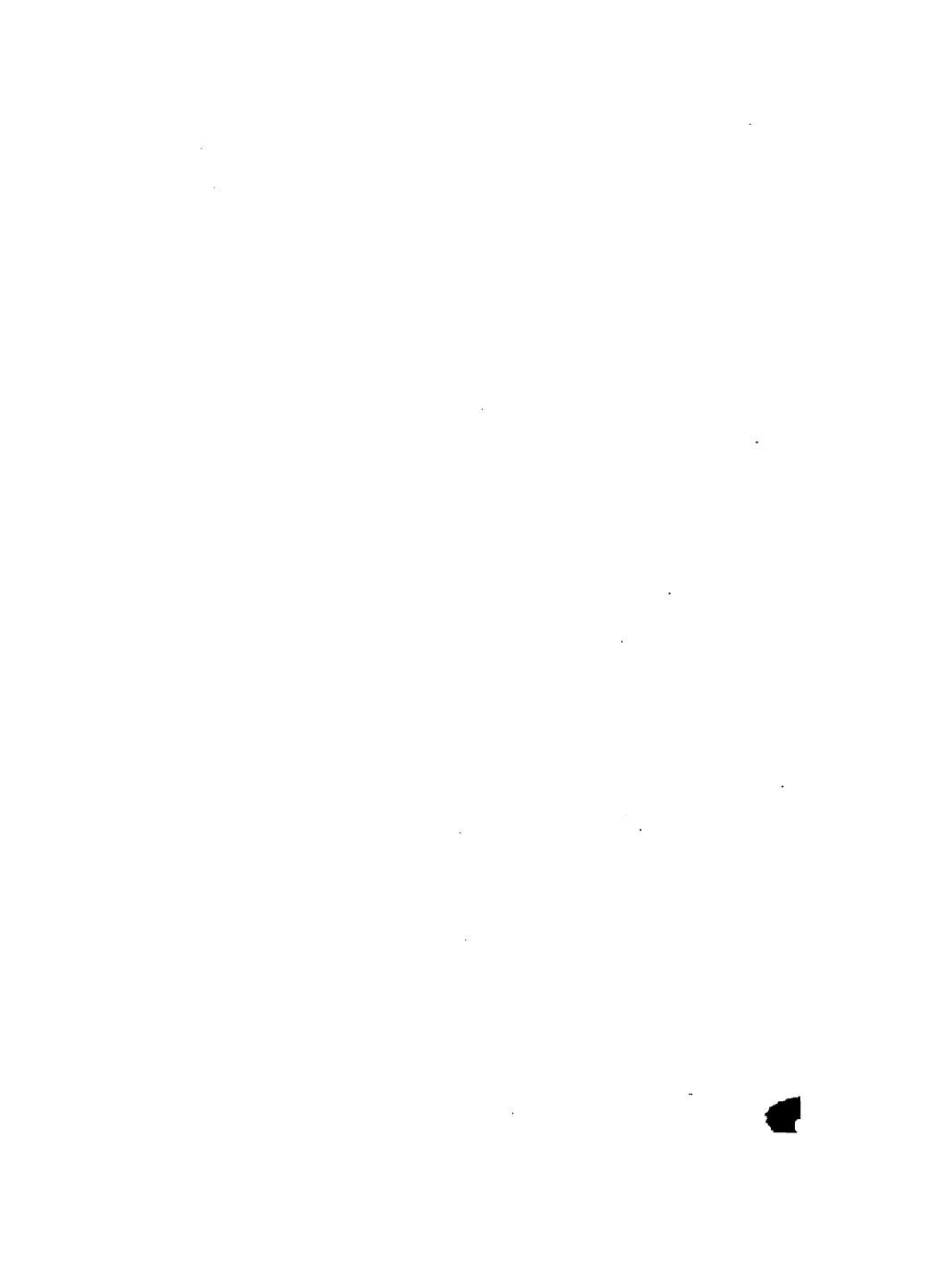
Like Vondel's, Staring's years transcended the allotted span. The clouds of misfortune which had lifted with his second marriage began to gather round him again in his old age. Charlotte, the '*wakkre Zorgster, moeder, vrouw*' of his silver-wedding ode, had grown blind; one of his sons was drowned at sea; his eldest daughter had died soon after her marriage. He was seventy-three when he himself was carried to the little churchyard of Vorden, close to Wildenborch, carved over the stone gateway of which may still be read two verses of his own:

* 'Dawn cometh from night's gloom,
And life from out the tomb.'

* Uit nacht rijst morgenrood,
Het Leven uit de Dood.

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